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Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam

An Annotated Translation of "The Bezels of Wisdom"

Binyamin Abrahamov

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Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam

Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam is a translation of one of the most important works written on Islamic Mysticism.

Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165–1240) is deemed the greatest mystic of Islam and his mystical philosophy has attracted the attention of both Muslims and non-Muslims from his time to the present day. Believing that the world is the self-manifestation of God, he claimed that all religions are equal and that the perfect human being is he who knows all the religious phenomena in the world. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* examines the singular characteristics of twenty-seven prophets of Islam and constitutes the best summary of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. The translation of these twenty-seven chapters is preceded by an introduction that explains the main ideas of Ibn al-ʿArabī' and is accompanied by explanatory notes to the text.

Providing an easily accessible translation of one of the greatest mystics of Islam, *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* is essential reading for students, scholars and researchers of Islamic Philosophy, Mysticism and Islamic Mysticism in particular.

Binyamin Abrahamov is Emeritus Professor, Department of Arabic, at Bar Ilan University. He has published five books, including *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism* (Routledge, 2003) and his research interests focus on Islamic Theology, Philosophy, Mysticism and Qur'anic exegesis.

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Introduction

Our author, Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-ʿArabī, was born in 560/1165 in Murcia in al-Andalus to a family of high social position. At the age of thirty-seven he left al-Andalus and travelled to the eastern lands of Islam, staying for various lengths of time in Mecca, Egypt, Syria and Rūm (Turkey). Finally he settled in Damascus (620/1223), where he died in 638/1240. During these years he wrote hundreds of works, met many Sufis, whom he mentioned by name, and taught his mystical and philosophical ideas. Claude Addas gathered and analyzed many details of his biography, available in his writings in a very informative book *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ʿArabī*.[1]

My interest in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings began several years ago after coming across Chittick's book *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*.[2] As a student of Islam in general and Islamic theology and Qur'ānic exegesis in particular, Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas seemed to me extraordinary even in terms of extreme Sufism. From the first reading of his writings, he appeared to me as an original thinker[3] whose daring concepts exceed the boundaries of Islam.[4] Undoubtedly, his mixing of mysticism, theology, philosophy, hermetic sciences, and law[5] in his voluminous[6] writings is unprecedented. Furthermore, he used a complex style of writings, which contains symbols,[7] allusions and rhetorical forms, with the presumption that he had an

1 SPK, pp. 1of.
2 Chittick's contribution to the understanding of the Greatest Master's works is enormous, and one cannot learn Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought without consulting this book, SDG, and his other writings.
3 I discussed his originality in my book *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, published by Anqa Publishing, Oxford 2014.
4 Peter Coates, *Ibn ʿArabi and Modern Thought – The History of Taking Metaphysics Seriously*, Oxford 2002; Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn ʿArabi*, London and New York 2004.
5 Sells, *Mystical Languages*, p. 63.
6 Apart from *The Meccan Revelations* (*Al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*), which consists of 560 chapters in 3,000 pages (Cairo edition), he wrote, according to his own testimony, 250 treatises. Morris, Part I, p. 540, n. 3. Of these only 95 are extant. J. Clark and Stephen Hirtenstein, "Establishing Ibn ʿArabī's Heritage," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society*, 52(2012):1–32.
7 See, for example, the beginning of ch. 25 in *Fuṣūṣ*.

expert audience who could understand him.[8] Add to these appealing factors his influence on later generations,[9] even into the modern era,[10] in the spheres of mysticism and philosophy, and you can understand why scholars and laypeople alike are eager to learn his thought.

The desire to know Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought involves overcoming several difficulties. First, the presentation of his ideas in many works forces the reader to examine thousands of pages. Second, as noted, the amalgamation of different spheres of Islamic culture compels the researcher to be an expert in these fields in order to detect influences and to assess the author's originality. Third, Ibn al-ʿArabī's style of writing is very complex and often terse and unclear. He also uses poetry as a means of conveying his thoughts.

To overcome the first obstacle, one can begin his study of Ibn al-ʿArabī by examining his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), because this treatise is relatively short (179 pages in Affifi's edition) and contains the basic principles of his thought. It is worth noting that the Muslims' reactions to Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings were derived from reading this work, because it was so accessible.[11] The two other impediments can be confronted by using the commentaries written on this work[12] and the available translations.[13] Naturally, the translator's knowledge of Islamic theology, philosophy, mysticism and the Qurʾān plays an important role in understanding the author's approaches.

After considering these problems and the ways to solve them, taking into consideration the development in the research on Ibn al-ʿArabī that has been carried out over the past thirty years, and examining the present translations, I reached the conclusion that a new translation of the *Fuṣūṣ* is required to enhance the study of the Greatest Master (*al-shaykh al-akbar*). It is not my intention to criticize my predecessors to justify my own initiative in translating the *Fuṣūṣ*. Indeed, I owe much of my understanding of Ibn al-ʿArabī's texts to previous translations. However, every translator finds his way to elucidating the text, to identifying its ideas and their sources, to recognizing Qurʾānic paraphrases, and to avoiding the errors of language which lead to incorrect translation. A literal translation of a sentence into English seems superfluous, if the reader is unable to follow the idea

8 Morris, Part I, p. 540.
9 Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*.
10 Coates, *Ibn ʿArabi and Modern Thought*.
11 Knysh, pp. 10f.
12 Muslim scholars, beginning with his immediate disciples, wrote more than a hundred commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*. Morris, Part I, p. 540, n. 5.
13 Austin, Burckhardt, Rauf, Dagli and al-Tarjumana. According to Rešid Hafizovic, the Turkish translation of the *Fuṣūṣ* which, in Bulent Rauf's view, was done by Ismail Hakki Bursevi, is really the work of a Bosnian Muslim scholar named Abdulla Effendi al-Bosnawi (d. 1644). *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 47 (2010):83–94. At any rate, Rauf translated the Turkish translation into English.

Stephen Hirtenstein kindly supplied me with a draft of his translation of several chapters of the *Fuṣūṣ*. He translated chapters 1–4, chapters 5 and 6 with Cecilia Twinch, and chapter 7 with Jane Clark. I benefited greatly from their translation and explanatory notes.

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conveyed by the sentence in the light of its context. Hence, I tried to translate the text in a simple and lucid manner, so that the reader may understand the purport in its context. This translation is destined not only for those who do not know Arabic, but also for those proficient in Arabic who might be perplexed in trying to understand this complicated text, in which even the meaning of technical terms changes depending on the context. Hence, I added transcription of the Arabic terms and tried to explain these terms, for two reasons: Ibn al-ʿArabī was prudent in choosing his terms, and frequently no equivalent terms exist in English matching the Arabic terms.[14]

The *Fuṣūṣ* consists of twenty-seven chapters, each treating a different prophet and his distinctive essence.[15] In the short introduction to the book, the author relates that he saw in a vision the Prophet giving him a book entitled *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and commanding him to deliver it to the people. Elsewhere, Ibn al-ʿArabī testifies to the divine source of his writings.[16] One might get the impression that our author tries to compare himself to Muḥammad, who received the whole Qurʾān from the angel Jibrīl.

The book is replete with repetitions of the author's ideas and terms. However, sometimes the same concept is discussed from different perspectives in such a way that minimizes the repetitiveness.[17] Furthermore, as Austin observes, "The overall impression on the reader is lack of proper organization and continuity."[18] Notwithstanding Ibn al-ʿArabī's statement of the book's source, it seems that its chapters consist of lectures delivered before an audience. The repetition of sentences and phrases, and mainly the reiteration of causal phrases, such as "because of" (*li-anna*), may support this supposition. Another possibility explaining the structure of the *Fuṣūṣ* is Chittick's characterization of Ibn al-ʿArabī's way of writing: "The writings of Ibn ʿArabī tend to be like sudden inspirations flowing from his pen with such force and velocity that they destroy horizontal and logical continuity. Qūnawī on the contrary is the model of logical consistency and point-by-point reasoning."[19] However, this description of Ibn al-ʿArabī's style does not characterize all the passages in the *Fuṣūṣ*, for example the discussion of the universals in ch. 1.

The structure of the chapter headings[20] is one and the same. The first word *faṣṣ* (pl. *fuṣūṣ*) denotes the bezel or setting in which the gemstone is set.[21] Thus, the

14 SDG, p. XXXVIII.

15 All the prophets are Qurʾānic figures, except Seth (Shīth) and Khālid ibn Sinān. There is no order of time, except for the appearance of Ādam as the first prophet and Muḥammad as the last.

16 Futūḥāt, Vol. VI, p. 233; SDG, p. 296; Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 2.

17 Ch. 4, n. 1.

18 Austin, p. 20.

19 "The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmi," p. 141.

20 No clear connections between the chapter headings and the text of the chapters are always examined. Austin, p. 20. The reader might ask why a certain chapter heading is appropriate only to one prophet and not to another.

21 Austin, p. 16.

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title of the book, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, means the bezels of wisdom which exist in the essence (*kalima*)[22] of each prophet. In his essence, each prophet has a predisposition (the bezel) which enables him to receive a specific wisdom. According to this interpretation, the bezel is the setting of the gemstone. However, at the beginning of chapter 1, the bezel is the gemstone itself and the setting is the universe. The perfect human being is placed in the universe to complete God's self-manifestation, because without him the mirror, that is, the cosmos, is not smooth and so things are not clearly seen in it.

Interpretations of Qurʾānic verses occupy a wide range of the work. In his interpretations, the author uses, apart from allusions and symbols, several other devices to support his ideas. He employs the plain meaning of the text,[23] points to the first meanings of words,[24] plays with the etymology of words,[25] changes words[26] and brings together verses from different *sūra*s of the Qurʾān to complete his ideas.[27] No doubt, Ibn al-ʿArabī assumes that, although the sacred Text consists of separate *sūra*s, the whole Qurʾān is one entity, each part supporting another. In this manner, the author can take a verse from one *sūra* and incorporate it in another to create one meaning.

Obviously, in his interpretations of the Qurʾān, Ibn al-ʿArabī implements the three principles of interpretation enjoined by the Sufis:

1 The Qurʾān contains many layers of meanings.[28]
2 The human being is capable of discovering these layers.
3 The interpretation of the Qurʾān is an endless task.

Furthermore, the philosophic notion Ibn al-ʿArabī adopts that the Qurʾān was destined to the common people helps him articulate his complicated interpretation.[29]

Consequently, Ibn al-ʿArabī's interpretations of the Qurʾānic text often deviate from the ordinary orthodox interpretations. One of the conspicuous examples is chapter 3 on Noah (Nūḥ). Also, the cases of Moses (Mūsā) and al-Khiḍr and that of Moses and Pharaoh (Firʿawn) (ch. 25) are interpreted in the light of Ibn al-ʿArabī's conceptions. Likewise, he freely interprets traditions and makes these fit his ideas.[30]

The present work is an annotated translation of the *Fuṣūṣ*. I have tried to translate the text in the manner called in the field of Qurʾānic translations *tarjamat*

22 Ch. 1, n.27.
23 *Fuṣūṣ*, p. 70 of the Arabic text (Qurʾān 42:11).
24 Ibid., pp. 73f.
25 Ibid., p. 71.
26 Ibid., p. 51.
27 Ibid., pp. 72f.
28 Nicholas Heer, "Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Esoteric Exegesis of the Koran," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn, Oxford 1999, Vol. I, pp. 235–239.
29 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 25. This contradicts what he says about special audience he has. See n. 7 above.
30 Austin, p. 22.

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al-maʿānī or *tarjama tafsīriyya*, which can be rendered "translation of the meanings" and "interpretative translation," respectively. This is not a literal translation, but rather a translation which conveys the meanings of the text.[31] Hence, I have interlaced the text with sentences and phrases in round parentheses which fill missing parts in the original or explain opaque expressions. In so doing, I follow the method of Izutsu's translation of Ibn al-ʿArabī's texts.[32] Furthermore, short footnotes with references to appropriate bibliographical entries, which are intended to widen the reader's knowledge, explain ideas and terms appearing in the text.

In trying to understand obscure passages, I used mainly the commentaries of al-Kāshānī (d. 730/1330), al-Qayṣarī (751/1350), Muṣṭafā ibn Sulaymān Bālī Zādeh (d. 1069/1658) and Affifi, the editor of the text. Other translations were infrequently consulted when the translator was not confident in his understanding and wished to see other suggestions.[33] In treating long sentences, I tended to divide them into shorter ones in order to make the understanding easier.

Believing that the researcher's role in the humanities is not only to present a text and to analyze its contents, but also to criticize the author whenever he contradicts himself or is unfaithful to his own convictions, I did not hesitate to comment on Ibn al-ʿArabī's inconsistencies.

Some technical notes are needed. In round parentheses appear the following items: references to Qurʾānic verses, numbers of pages in Affifi's edition of the text, necessary additions to the text, and words and terms in transcription. Intentionally, I did not use square brackets or other kinds of parentheses to make the reading easier, because the text suffers no lacuna. Also, all blessings for God and the prophets were omitted.[34]

As a thinker who tried to explain existence by using previous as well as his own notions, Ibn al-ʿArabi can be regarded as a philosopher. However, employing

31 For example, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, *An Explanatory Translation*, by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, New York 1953. Meir M. Bar-Asher, "Muslim Views Regarding the Translation of the Qurʾān" (Hebrew), in *On Translating the Qurʾān*, ed. Yohanan Friedmann, Jerusalem 2012, pp. 24f.

32 Sells, "Garden," pp. 287f, n. 1. Sells represents an opposite view and tries to translate the text as is without interpolations. He states in an exaggerated manner, to my mind, the following: "No particular expression or manifestation of the central principles is self-sufficient or transparent. Each new passage reveals something and veils something. *There is always an obscurity* (the emphasis is mine), an undefined term, a new paradox." He reaches the conclusion that "Finally, it is impossible to separate what is being said and how it is said and thus impossible to paraphrase faithfully the text…"

33 French translations such as Gilis's were not consulted.

34 The blessings for God, such as "may He be exalted," are not, in Sells's view, primarily expressions of piety, as usually understood, but rather "they evoke the entire apophatic dialectic, and might be translated as follows: 'May he (or it) be praised through the attribute being attributed to him here, but also exalted beyond this attribute.'" "Polished Mirror," p. 137. However, since the apophatic dialectic is often explicitly expressed by Ibn al-ʿArabī in the *Fuṣūṣ*, the rendering of these blessings seems to me superfluous.

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the mystical ideas of his Sufi predecessors[35] and blending these with philosophical teachings turns his thought into mystical philosophy, as Affifi rightly states in his introduction to the edition of the *Fuṣūṣ*.[36] Naturally, I do not ignore the Sufi practice that Ibn al-ʿArabī extensively deals with in his writings.[37] However, when taking into consideration the ultimate goal of the Sufi, that is, coming close to God, one should note that Ibn al-ʿArabī's Sufi practice is tightly connected to his mystical philosophy. Even in this volume in which Ibn al-ʿArabī mainly treats his mystical philosophy, some examples of mystical practice appear, such as the invocation to God at the end of chapter 15 (Jesus - ʿĪsā).

Two basic ideas lie at the core of our author's thought. The first is the unity or oneness of existence or being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), an idea that had not appeared in its complete form in Islam before,[38] and the second is the theory of aspects, which explains or makes the first idea conceivable.[39] The first term never appeared in his writings and was coined by his commentators, while the second idea constitutes a device I used to elucidate his notions. The author himself does not speak of such a theory, although he uses many times the formula "from this perspective." This formula goes back to earlier Sufis.[40]

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's view, the true existence is one and it is God's Existence. Thus, God's Essence, attributes and names,[41] and the cosmos including all its phenomena are one existence.[42] However, the Greatest Master distinguishes between God's Essence (*dhāt*)[43] which cannot be known and His names which can be known. In explaining the relationships between God as Essence and His names, Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions a Kalām formula according to which the names are neither Himself nor other than Himself.[44] However, he prefers the view of the Mutakallim Abū al-Hudhayl, who asserts that God knows by virtue of His attribute of knowledge which is identical to His Essence. Anyhow, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the attributes to be relationships and attributions or states, and as such

35 See my book *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis.*
36 Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, pp. 10f.
37 Morris, Part I, p. 541.
38 Affifi, I, p. 25.
39 Izutsu (p. 152) writes that Ibn al-ʿArabī's concept of God's self-manifestation (*tajallin*) "is the very basis of his world view." However, from a logical point of view, the oneness of existence is the foundation of his theory and God's self-manifestation explains the relationships between God and the cosmos in a unified existence. The fact that our author dedicates much space to God's self-manifestation and its ramifications does not cancel the place of the theory's cornerstone.
40 *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 172f.
41 From this point onward I will use only the term "names," because it designates the concepts of the attributes. Thus, mercy is the attribute and Merciful is the name.
42 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 23.
43 Although Ibn al-ʿArabī states that God's absolute existence cannot be known, he ascribes to this entity the power of existentiating everything. Also, the assertion that no multiplicity exists in it means that humans have some knowledge of the Essence.
44 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 21.

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they are not separate entities existing in God's Essence.[45] Thus, God's Unity is absolute from the standpoint of His Essence but many from the perspective of the cosmos.[46]

God's names are different from each other and also arranged in hierarchical order; for example, knowledge is higher than will,[47] but regarding God's Essence they are equal to each other.[48] Mercy encompasses everything, and as such it brings all things into existence.[49] As noted, these names represent relationships between God and His self-manifestation.[50] The cosmos is under the control of God's names.[51] From this perspective each name is called *rabb* (lord) and is responsible for certain acts and for specific people.[52] Since the phenomena in the cosmos are infinite, God's names are infinite, but they can be reduced to some basic names.[53] For example, the name Merciful functions as the Creator.[54]

A distinction exists between the term *allāh* (God) and the term *rabb* (lord). Whereas the Lord is the Real who is manifested in a particular name, which is dedicated to a specific person or an event, Allāh denotes all the names which always change.[55]

The cosmos reflects God's names, or God's self-manifestation through His names. Not only does the cosmos as a whole express God's names, but also the perfect human being, Adam, or other extraordinary figures such as the Prophet and the saints. They contain in their essences all the ingredients of the cosmos; that is, God's names.[56] When Ibn al-ʿArabī speaks of Muḥammad, he does not mean the historical prophet, but the spirit of Muḥammad (*al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*), which preceded all existents. Hence, Muḥammadans, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's view, are not necessarily Muslims, but rather those who comprise in themselves all the elements of God's self-manifestation – those who know, for example, that all religions are expressions of His self-manifestation.[57]

Sometimes, our author goes further when claiming that even every atom in the cosmos contains all the forms of the cosmos.[58] That is because God's self-manifestation is expressed not only through the external form of everything, but through the permeation of God's Essence, as exists in His names, into everything. Ibn al-ʿArabī uses examples taken from philosophy or nature to illustrate

45 Ibid., chs. 16, 21.
46 Ibid., chs. 22, 25.
47 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 16 ; Izutsu, pp. 104–107.
48 *Fuṣūṣ*, chs. 2, 4.
49 Ibid., chs. 16, 21.
50 Ibid., ch. 4.
51 Ibid., ch. 3.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., ch. 9; Izutsu, p. 101.
54 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 21; Izutsu, ch. 9.
55 Ibid., ch. 7; Izutsu, pp. 110–115.
56 Ibid., ch. 25.
57 See ch. 3, n. 21.
58 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 16; *Futūḥāt*, Vol. IV, p. 471.

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this phenomenon. Thus, just as Primordial Matter (*hayūlā*) permeates everything and constitutes the common denominator of everything, so does God's Essence.[59] Elsewhere, water appears as a symbol of God's Essence penetrating everything.[60] In like manner, color permeates the colored thing.[61] Also the number one, which is a symbol of God, is found in all numbers, because each number is the sum of ones. Thus God in the cosmos is like the number one in each number. This phenomenon explains the idea that a thing may be one and many at the same time.[62] Also the cosmos's phenomena are symbolized as shadows produced by the light God's names cast on the fixed entities.[63] By this metaphor, the author states that although the phenomena seem to be concrete, they depend for their existence on God's names, which means their existence is unreal.

One of the results of the notion of God's self-manifestation is the notion that the cause is also the effect. God's Essence is the cause of all phenomena, which is the effect. However, since all phenomena constitute God's self-manifestation of His Essence, His Essence is both cause and effect.[64]

In order to describe the process of the cosmos's appearance or God's self-manifestation often associated with the word creation (*khalq*), though this is not the creation meant by Muslim theologians, Ibn al-ʿArabī uses mythic language. First, the motivation of God's self-manifestation is His names' desire to see themselves in another entity; that is, the cosmos. Or, in other words, God, the hidden treasure, desired to be known.[65] The names are also depicted as forces wishing to burst out of their being under the pressure of an inability to act.[66] Then God, as the Merciful,[67] breathed into His names, thus creating the fixed entities, and God's second breath caused these entities to become concrete things.[68] This process is occurring endlessly.[69]

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's view, not only the cosmos as a whole serves as a mirror of Him, but also the Perfect Human Being, Adam, contains in himself all the forms of God's names. Accordingly, Ibn al-ʿArabī regards Adam as God's vicegerent.[70]

59 Ibid., ch. 12.
60 Ibid., ch. 19.
61 Ibid., ch. 5. Ibn al-ʿArabī also uses God's name *al-laṭīf* (the Subtle) to signify that God permeates everything as an immaterial substance. Ibid., ch. 23; Izutsu, 141. In his *Sharḥ asmāʾ allāh al-ḥusnā* (p. 253), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī points out that *al-laṭīf* means the imperceptible. Whereas *al-laṭīf* means God's permeation of everything in the material world, the name *al-khabīr* (the Knowing) means His pervading the consciousness of every human being. Ibid., ch. 23; Izutsu, pp. 142f.
62 Ibid., ch. 4.
63 Ibid., ch. 9; Izutsu, ch. 6.
64 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 22.
65 Ibid., chs. 1, 25.
66 Ibid., ch. 25.
67 Ibid., ch. 12.
68 Ibid., ch. 15.
69 Ibid., ch. 25.
70 On vicegerency and messengerhood, see ch. 25.

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Actually, every human being reflects God, even in his outward form,[71] hence to know oneself (or one's soul) means to know God.[72] However, the most Perfect Human Being is Muḥammad, whose spirit preceded Adam's existence.[73] As noted, by Muḥammad, Ibn al-ʿArabī does not mean the historical Muḥammad, but rather the reality or the essence of the Prophet; that is, his spiritual entity which has been embodied in prophets and saints.[74] It is worth noting that just as the human being serves as God's mirror, so God is the human being's mirror through which he sees his own soul.[75] God is reflected in the cosmos, and the cosmos is reflected in God.[76] Likewise, our author says that God is known only through the human being, and the human being through God.[77] Ibn al-ʿArabī inevitably concludes that the human being grants existence to God.[78] The mutual relationship between God and man is also exemplified through the notion that just as God commands humans to act in specific ways, so the human being commands God to forgive him.[79]

Furthermore, since the human being reflects God's names, and since God's names are arranged in a hierarchic manner, so that God as a knower is more general than God who wills, also the human being has different levels, at the highest of which stands the gnostic (*ʿārif*) and at the lowest the ignorant (*jāhil*).[80]

The process of God's self-manifestation or creation is perpetual; God never stops destroying and creating the cosmos at the same time. Only the heart of the human being can perceive such endless changes, because, contrary to the intellect (*ʿaql*), which limits, the heart (*qalb*), as its name testifies, is able to perceive all changes in the cosmos.[81]

As he so often does, Ibn al-ʿArabī advances another explanation of the phenomenon of creation, this time from a theological perspective. Basing himself on Qurʾān 16:40, "When We will a thing (to be), We only say to it 'be' and it comes into being," he points out three divine elements: 1. God's Essence (the word "We") from the perspective of His self-manifestation; 2. God's will; and 3. God's command ("be"). Facing these three divine elements stand three parallel elements of the fixed entities. These are: 1. the thingness of the fixed entities; that is, their potential being as things; 2. their hearing; and 3. their obedience to God's command "be." In Ibn al-ʿArabī's view, the fixed entities produce themselves

71 Ibid., ch. 19.
72 Ibid., ch. 1; Izutsu, pp. 234–35.
73 Ibid., ch. 27.
74 Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds,* p. 31.
75 *Fuṣūṣ*, chs. 2, 22.
76 Ibid., ch. 5.
77 Ibid., ch. 7.
78 Ibid., ch. 5.
79 Ibid., ch. 15.
80 Ibid., ch. 10. For another classification, see ch. 22.
81 Ibid., chs. 12, 16.

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because they obey God's command. In other words, the potentiality of becoming existents is brought into actuality by the divine command.[82]

The tripartite principle – here mentioned in the context of the coming into being of the fixed entities – governs Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. Just as this principle shows us the process of creation, it produces true ideas through the practice of syllogism, also composed of three parts, two premises and a conclusion.[83] Moreover, chapter 27 about Muḥammad is built on the basis of a tradition which is composed of three parts.

The idea of the fixed entities (*aʿyān thābita*) plays an important role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's cosmogony. As noted, these entities, reminiscent of Plato's ideas, are the concrete things in their hidden forms before their appearance in the cosmos.[84] Furthermore, these also determine the structure of everything, its essence and its acts. Actually, all God's acts, including His turning to the human being, are determined by the human fixed entity. God's knowledge follows the content of the fixed entities, and His will follows this content, which was previously conceived by God. Consequently, all the human being's acts and the time of their occurrences are decreed in the fixed entities. Strangely enough, the human being's will, which appears in his fixed entities, establishes the form of God's self-manifestation to him.[85] Thus, God is compelled to act in keeping with His own thought expressed in the fixed entities.

This scheme of processes absolutely excludes the possibility of human free will, which, to our surprise, our author holds true. How can one explain free will in a world in which all the phenomena are preordained in the fixed entities and even God is coerced to act in accordance with what is set firmly in them? One can answer this question by pointing to the fact that from the human perspective free will exists; one feels that following one's will, one can freely act. However, from the cosmic standpoint, one is compelled to act as is decreed in one's fixed entity. In other words, in the terrestrial plan, every human being possesses free will, or at least feels he has free will, while in the divine domain all was already determined, including one's will. If all the phenomena, including free will, are the expression of God's self-manifestation, there is no meaning to the responsibility for one's acts.

Another result of the idea of the unity of existence, or the idea that God is the sole true existent, is the notion that what we call "the concrete cosmos" is nothing but imagination. Speaking of the world or dreaming it means imagination within imagination.[86] Imagination as a faculty of the soul is sometimes stronger than the intellect, even though each faculty produces different approaches

82 Ibid., ch. 11; Izutsu, pp. 198–201.
83 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 11.
84 In *Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir* (pp. 16f), Ibn al-ʿArabī states that the fixed entities are neither existent nor non-existent, meaning they are existent in God's thought but non-existent from the perspective of the concrete phenomena. Izutsu, pp. 160–163.
85 *Fuṣūṣ*, chs. 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 18, 25.
86 Ibid., ch. 9; Izutsu, p. 7.

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regarding God.[87] Through the intellect one may reach the conclusion that God is transcendent, while through his imagination he is aware of God's immanence. Gaining the knowledge that God is both transcendent and immanent means attaining the truth.[88] This leads the human being to see the One in the Many and the Many in the One, or alternatively to see the Many as One and the One as Many. Thus, one is led to perplexity (*ḥayra*), because one does not know whether God is One or Many.[89] However, this state characterizes the earliest stage of spiritual development; the gnostic, the one who experiences God's self-manifestation, does not suffer perplexity.[90] Even the prophet Noah was mistaken when he spoke to his people of only God's transcendence.[91]

The human being's knowledge of God is divided by Ibn al-ʿArabī into two parts: a. one's knowledge of God from the perspective of one's essence; and b. one's knowledge of God from the perspective of God who is manifested in one's essence.[92] In order to know the true state of the world and God's attitude toward it, one must relinquish his intellect and be like an animal.[93] Also, using rational arguments does not lead the human being to true knowledge.[94]

Still another outcome of the perception of the oneness of existence is the notion, from the perspective of metaphysics, that all religions are equal, because they are God's self-manifestation. The common denominator of all religions is the worship of God. God is worshiped in every form. The Greatest Master speaks of the god of belief (*ilāh fīl-iʿtiqād)* which is peculiar to each people or group, because of their predisposition and circumstances. However, the human being should know that beyond the god of his belief, there is God, who is the source of all religions. For example, in prayer the Muslim should turn his face toward Mecca; however, he should know that God is everywhere, which actually means the possibility of other ways of worship.[95]

One of the most important themes in the *Fuṣūṣ* is God' gifts which He gives either from His essence or from His names. God's gift from His essence is His self-manifestation to the human being. God's gifts stemming from His names are all the other benefits humanity receives, such as sustenance. Ibn al-ʿArabī also discusses the states of the human beings who request divine gifts and those who do not and the question of which of the two groups is preferable.[96]

In the context of revelation, Ibn al-ʿArabī treats prophethood, which derives from God's Mercy.[97] He distinguishes between general prophethood

87 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 22.
88 Ibid., chs. 22, 4.
89 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 3; Izutsu, p. 69.
90 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 4; Izutsu, pp. 85f.
91 *Fuṣūṣ*, chs. 3, 9, 22.
92 Ibid., ch. 5; Izutsu, pp. 40f.
93 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 22.
94 Ibid., ch. 12.
95 Ibid., chs. 8, 10, 24, 25.
96 Ibid., chs. 2, 16, 17.
97 Ibid., ch. 24.

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(*nubuwwa ʿāmma*) and legislative prophethood (*nubuwwat tashrīʿ*). The first kind of prophethood, also called *walāya* (sainthood, literally: proximity to God or friendship toward God), denotes the essential quality of one who is close to God and receives from Him revelations of any kind. Prophets, messengers and saints (*walī*, pl. *awliyāʾ*) share this quality. The second kind of prophethood is always connected with messengerhood and denotes the transmission of God's laws to peoples. Thus, every messenger is a prophet and hence has the quality of *walāya*, but not every saint is a messenger. Consequently, from the perspective of the *walāya*, no difference obtains between prophets, messengers and saints. However, whereas Muḥammad is considered the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-anbiyāʾ*) with respect to the legislative prophethood, he is not the seal of the saints, which means the one who brought the *walāya* to its highest level.[98] It is worth noting that Ibn al-ʿArabī regarded himself as the seal of the saints.[99] At the end of chapter 14 on ʿUzayr, *walāya* appears as a principle preferable to legislative prophecy, and the author points out that after Muḥammad legislation was given to scholars. This is seemingly an allusion that legislation has not ended. No doubt, Ibn al-ʿArabī adopted his theory of the *walāya* from al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's teachings.[100]

In the context of Jesus' prophecy, Ibn al-ʿArabī deals with miracles. Among these are, for example, the appearance of the angel Jibrīl in the form of a human being, his speaking to Mary, Jesus' procreation, and his speaking in the cradle and revivification of the dead.[101] In contradistinction to what he says elsewhere,[102] here Ibn al-ʿArabī expresses no reservation regarding the performing of physical miracles, very probably because they are recorded in the Sacred Books. In addition, our author also speaks of the spiritual miracle by which dead soul, a symbol of ignorance, is restored by divine knowledge to life.[103]

As noted, the theory of aspects is not a doctrine developed by Ibn al-ʿArabī, but deduced from his words. This theory explains away contradictions found in our author's thought. The notion that God is both transcendent and immanent seems at first sight contradictory, for if God is ontologically and epistemologically beyond our perception, how can He be within the cosmos? And if, on the other hand, He is immanent, how can He be beyond our perception? Ibn al-ʿArabī solves this problem by asserting that from the standpoint of the intellect, that is, logical perception, He is transcendent; however, from the standpoint of His self-manifestation, He is immanent. The truth comprises both aspects. In like manner, God is the First and the Last. He is the First, because everything derives from Him, and He is the Last, because everything returns to Him.[104]

98 Ibid., chs. 2, 13–15, 17.
99 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, ch. 9.
100 Radtke and O'Kane.
101 *Fuṣūṣ,* chs. 15, 20.
102 Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 47–49.
103 *Fuṣūṣ,* ch. 15.
104 *Fuṣūṣ*, chs. 1–4, 22, 25.

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Also the nature of God is twofold. From the aspect of His Essence, He is One, but from the aspect of His self-manifestation He is Many.[105] In the moral sphere, things are not different. From the perspective of metaphysics, as expressions of God's self-manifestation, good and evil things are not different from each other. However, judged by humans, one who does evil deserves punishment, and one who does good deserves reward.[106] Likewise, all religions are equal from the cosmic perspective, because religion means worship, and each people worship a certain god. Here, Ibn al-ʿArabī recommends humans to consider the equality of religions and have the capacity to know their common source.[107]

One of the most important hendiadys, also known from other trends of thought, is the manifest (*ẓāhir*) and the hidden (*bāṭin*). For example, from the manifest perspective, throwing Moses into the river means putting him to death, yet, from the hidden perspective, water symbolizes knowledge; thus, Moses was thrown into the river in order to attain knowledge. The Greatest Master explains all Moses' and al-Khiḍr's acts in keeping with these two aspects.[108]

These two aspects express one entity, the cosmos; the Real is the inward aspect of the cosmos, while the human being expresses its outward aspect.[109] Similarly, the human being's essence can be analyzed from two perspectives, humanity and animality, each having a different function in the human being.[110]

The present survey of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings in the *Fuṣūṣ* is, of course, not exhaustive, but aims to give the reader the principles of his thought, so that he will be able to understand the text. To attain a wider knowledge of the Greatest Master's ideas and worldview, one should consult, apart from the explanations, the references given in the footnotes.

105 Ibid. ch. 7.
106 Ibid., chs. 8,
107 Ibid., ch. 10.
108 Ibid., chs. 5, 25. For further discussion of this topic, see Sells, "Polished Mirror," and "Garden" (= chs. 3, 4 in his *Mystical Languages*).
109 Affifi, I, p. 36.
110 *Fuṣūṣ*, ch. 24.

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1 The bezel of the wisdom of divinity exists in the essence of Adam

Preface

(47) In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God who has sent down from eternity (many) kinds of wisdom (*ḥikma*, pl. *ḥikam*)[1] upon the hearts[2] of the perfect humans (*kalim*)[3] in a unique right way, even if the sects and religious communities vary because of the variety of nations. May God bless and protect him (Muḥammad) who bestows (on people) spiritual aspirations[4] from the treasuries of (His) generosity (*khazā'in al-jūd*)[5] and kindness through the most valuable statements.

I saw God's Messenger in a vision (*mubashshira*)[6] during the latter part of the month of Muḥarram in the year 627 (1229) in Damascus. Seizing in his hand a book, he said to me, "This is *Kitāb fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (the book of *The Bezels of Wisdom*); take it and bring it to people so that they might benefit from it." I said, "I hear and obey God, His Messenger and those in authority[7] among us as we are commanded." Therefore, I implemented the Messenger's wish with sincere intention and pure aim and aspiration and made this book manifest as God's Messenger determined without increase or decrease. I asked God to include me, both in this (mission) and in all my states (*aḥwālī*), among His servants over whom the Devil has no authority.[8] I also asked Him that in all that which my fingers may write, in all that which my tongue

1 For this term see Hikmet Yaman, *Prophetic Niche in the Virtuous City: The Concept of Ḥikmah in Early Islamic Thought*, Leiden and Boston 2011.
2 In Sufism the heart is the place in which revelations are received.
3 By this word he means the realities of prophets and God's friends. Jandī, p. 95. Affifi, II, p. 4.
4 *Himma*, pl. *himmam*. For this term see SPK, p. 104 and index.
5 Ibn al-ʿArabī devotes a long chapter (369) in the *Futūḥāt* to the issue of the treasuries of generosity, entitled "The knowledge of the waystation of the keys to the treasuries of generosity." It is also possible to understand this word as internal knowledge bestowed by God, or as God's names. Affifi, II, p. 5.
6 SPK, p. 403, n. 18. *Sharḥ* (p. 12) interprets this word as correct vision or dream (*ruʾyā ṣāliḥa*).
7 Qur'ān 4:59: "You who believe, obey God and the Messenger and those in authority among you." Trans. AH.
8 Cf. Qur'ān 14:22: "I had no power over you" (trans. AH), said the Devil. See also Qur'ān 16:99–100, 17:65.

may utter, and in all that which my heart may contain, to bestow only upon my mind glorified revelation (*ilqāʾ subbūḥī*)[9] and spiritual blowing (*nafth rūḥī*)[10] through His protective support. (I asked this for the purpose) of my being a transmitter (*mutarjim*) and not one who writes according to his own thoughts (*mutaḥakkim*).[11] Consequently, those who learn it (the book), among the people of God (*ahl allāh*),[12] the people of contemplation, may be certain that it originates in (48) the Place of Sanctification (in God) that is exempt from personal interests[13] in which deception is involved. I hope that God (*al-ḥaqq*),[14] having heard my prayer, will accede to my call, for I shall convey (literally: cast into – *alqā*)[15] only that which He conveyed to me, and I shall not send down (*unazzilu*)[16] in this book anything except that which God sent down to me. I am neither a prophet nor a messenger, but only an heir (of prophets and messengers)[17] preparing for the world to come (*li-ākhiratī ḥārith*).[18]

Hear from God!/And return to God!
When you hear what I bring/pay attention!
Then through understanding detail/the whole and combine the
details into a whole
Then bestow it[19] upon//its seekers and do not withhold (them from it)
This is the Mercy that/embraces you,[20] so make it known (to others)[21]

I asked God to be one of those who are given revelation and accept it, and of those who are restricted (*quyyida*)[22] by the pure Muḥammadan Law and accept its

9 SPK, p. 35.
10 Ibid., p. 169.
11 Literally: one who rules over his thoughts. *Sharḥ*, p. 14.
12 These are the greatest friends of God, those who achieve unveiling in its true and extreme form. SPK, p. 388, n. 20; SDG, pp. XIV, 56.
13 Or interests of the lower soul (*nafs*). Austin, p. 46.
14 The Real or the Truly Real. SPK, p. 132.
15 For the use of *alqā* with the object "word" (*kalima*), see Qurʾān 4:171.
16 It is not by chance that Ibn al-ʿArabī employs here the verb *nazzala* (he sent down), because this verb designates the sending down of the Qurʾān, and our author regards himself as one who receives divine revelation, although he is neither a prophet nor a messenger, but God's friend (*walī*).
17 Here he alludes to the famous tradition that "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets (*al-ʿulamāʾ warathat al-anbiyāʾ*). Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*, Vol. IV, p. 98.
18 "Who so desires the tillage (*ḥarth*) of the world to come, We shall give him increase in his tillage . . . " (Qurʿān 42:20).
19 This word refers to "understanding" in the line above.
20 This sentence is a clear echo of Qurʾān 7:156: " . . . My mercy embraces all things." Trans. AH.
21 For the author's poetry, see Denis E. McAuley, *Ibn ʿArabī's Mystical Poetics*, Oxford 2012. Using poetry, which is regular in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings, is recorded in Sufism from its earlier time. See, for example, T. Graham, "Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr and the school of Khurasān," in *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol. I, pp. 96–106.
22 This sentence is reminiscent of al-Junayd's dictum "Our knowledge (that is, mystical knowledge) is bound (*muqayyad*) by the Book (the Qurʾān) and the Sunna (Tradition). *Futūḥāt*, II, p. 41. Another version of this dictum reads "Our knowledge is built (*mushayyad*) by the Book and the Sunna." Ibid., Vol. II, p. 337. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 78f.

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restriction and restrict (others). May God gather us in His group[23] as He made us part of His community. The first (chapter) which the Lord reveals to the servant is as follows:

The bezel[24] of the wisdom[25] of divinity exists in the essence[26] of Ādam[27]

(48) The Real,[28] from the perspective of His Names,[29] wanted to see the essences of His uncountable Most Beautiful Names (*asmāʾ ḥusnā*),[30] as they really operate, or if you wish, say to see His Essence, in an all-inclusive being containing all of them and qualified by existence. Through this being, His mystery will be revealed to Him. That is, because one's self seeing is not like one's seeing oneself in another, which serves as a mirror for the seer. (The reason for this preference) is that the mirror reveals to the seer himself in a shape which is (49) given by the substrate (*maḥall*) which one observes. If such a substrate does not exist and does not appear to the seer, he cannot see himself.

23 Very probably the author means by the phrase "God's group" God's people (*ahl allāh*) which denotes, as mentioned above, the greatest friends of God, or the highest rank of mystics.

24 This word can also be translated as ring setting. Sometimes Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to refer to the stones rather than to the bezels. Sells, *Mystical Languages*, p. 248, n. 22.

25 *Ḥikm*a (wisdom) means the knowledge of things as they really are and acting accordingly. In this meaning it is identical to philosophy. The Sufis regard *ḥikma* as designating the hidden knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*), and Ibn al-ʿArabī follows them. Affifi, II, pp. 3f.

26 The word *Kalima* denotes *ḥaqīqa* (essence) of a prophet, which amounts to an attribute of God. Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, p. 976. Also it designates a prophet. Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, pp. 72f. If by *kalima* we mean logos, that is, special traits of the prophets (Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī's Summary," p. 4), then it is equivalent to essence. It is worth noting that in philosophical contexts one of the meanings of logos is the internal nature of something. Walbridge, *God and Logic*, p. 19.

27 The perfect reality of Ādam, that is, the human kind, serves as a frame in which the divine wisdom is placed. In other words, humanity is the perfect place wherein all God's attributes are manifested. Likewise, each prophet's reality serves as a frame for an attribute of God. In other words, each prophet possesses a predisposition for a specific divine attribute. As noted above, it is also possible to understand *faṣṣ* not as a bezel but as a ringstone. This would not change the general idea of the inherence of God's attributes in prophets.

28 The sentence begins with *lammā*, meaning because, but owing to the length of the sentence, this word cannot be rendered here and will be replaced later by "because of this idea."

29 In Ibn al-ʿArabī's view, there are two aspects of God's Essence: a. the Essence, or the Self about which nothing can be said; and b. the Essence with respect to His Names and Attributes, which can be known. Here His Names wish to see themselves. Sells, "Garden," pp. 295f, n. 12; idem, "Polished Mirror," p. 137.

30 Although God is qualified by ninety-nine names, Ibn al-Arabī says that they are infinite. It seems that the reason of his statement is the uncountable phenomena of the world which express His names. Since the phenomena are infinite, their sources, the names, are infinite. *Sharḥ al-Jandī*, p. 69. On the possibility that God's names are more than ninety-nine, see al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā*, pp. 184–191.

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(Because of this idea),[31] the Real brought the whole cosmos into existence (*awjada*),[32] an existence of an indistinct shape without a spirit in it, and it was like an unpolished mirror. According to God's customary rule, He does not make a substrate unless it receives the divine spirit, which is expressed by "breathing into it."[33] This breathing means the coming to be of a predisposition (*istiʿdād*) of this created form to receive the constant revealed overflow (*fayḍ*) which has not ceased and will never cease. There is only a receptacle (*qābil*), which derives from His holy overflow (*fayḍ aqdas)*.[34] All existents[35] come from Him, their beginning and their end, and "all things are brought back to God,"[36] just as they begin from Him.

(The revelation of) all things required the disclosure (*jalāʾ*)[37] of the mirror of the world. Ādam was equal to the clearness of this mirror[38] and the spirit of this form (that is, the mirror). The angels were among the faculties of this form, that is, the form of the world, which is expressed in popular terminology through "the Great Human Being." The angels relate to the world like the relationship between the spiritual and sensual faculties in the human structure (to the body). Each of these faculties is veiled through itself from seeing something better than its essence, for it claims that it (the human structure) has competence for every high position and exalted rank with God, because it has the divine all-comprehensiveness (*al-jamʿiyya al-ilāhiyya*),[39] which goes back to the divine side (*al-janāb al-ilāhī*)[40] and to the side of the Reality of Realities (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*), and with respect to the structure which possesses these qualities, (it goes back) to that which is required by the Universal Nature which comprises all the receptacles of the world, higher and lower.[41]

31 This is the alternative to the *lammā* mentioned above.
32 Although in our author's thought the creation of the world does not coincide with the usual orthodox approach of creation ex nihilo, he uses the terminology of this approach, such as *awjada* (he brought into existence), *ḥadatha* (it came into being), and *khalaqa* (he created).
33 Qurʾān 11:123. Sells, *Mystical Languages*, p. 246, n. 11.
34 The holy overflow is responsible for the production of the fixed entities (*aʿyān thābita*), possible intelligible forms possessing potential power of becoming existents in the world, reminiscent of the Platonic ideas, which come into being in existence through the sacred overflow (*fayḍ muqaddas*). Whereas the first overflow is the Real's self-manifestation in the fixed entities, the second overflow is His self-manifestation in the concrete forms in the world. Affifi, II, pp. 8f. In themselves these things, that is, the objects of God's knowledge, are nonexistent. SDG, pp. XIXf.
35 *Al-amr kulluhu* here designates the whole cosmos. *Sharḥ*, p. 22.
36 Qurʾān 2:210.
37 *Jalāʾ* may also mean the clearness of this mirror.
38 That is, because in his essence he reflects all the ingredients of the world.
39 SPK, p. 195.
40 By "the divine side" Ibn al-ʿArabī may mean God's names. Affifi, II, p. 10.
41 Humans reflect God's attributes, or the divine side (*al-janāb al-ilāhī*), the first intellect (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*) and the Universal Nature (*al-ṭabīʿa al-kulliyya*). Cf. Affifi, II, pp. 10f. Sells, "Garden," p. 312, n. 38.

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This (idea)[42] is not known by the intellect (*ʿaql*) through rational observation (*naẓar fikrī*),[43] but rather this kind of perception originates only in divine unveiling (*kashf ilāhī*). Through this divine unveiling the foundation of the forms of the world which contain its spirits is known.

The (entity) mentioned above is called (so) a human being and the vicegerent (*khalīfa*)[44] (of God). As for his humanness, it derives from his comprehensive structure and his comprising of all the realities, (because) the human being (*insān*) relates to the Real (*al-ḥaqq* – God) as the pupil (*insān al-ʿayn*) relates to the eye, and through the pupil seeing (*naẓar*, *baṣar*) occurs. Hence, he is called *insān* (meaning human being and pupil), because through him the Real looks (*naẓara*) at His creation and has mercy (*raḥima*)[45] on them. This human being is both created in time and is eternal, coming into being and living forever.[46] He is both the separating and unifying principle (literally: word – *kalima*).[47] The world owes its existence to him. His relation to the world is like the relation of the bezel of the seal ring to the seal ring. The human being is the tool (literally: place or substrate) and the sign by which the King seals His treasure. Because of (this function) God calls him the vicegerent, for through him God preserves His creation, as the seal ring preserves the treasures. So long as the King's seal is on the treasures, no one dares to open them, except with His permission. For this reason, God has appointed him as a vicegerent who preserves His possessions (*mulk*). So long as the Perfect Human Being remains, the world will not cease to exist.[48] Do you not see that when he disappears and the seal of the treasure of the world is broken, nothing of what the Real preserved in the treasure will remain, and all the parts which exist in it will go out being united with each other, and all of them will move to another world (*al-Ākhira*) and he (the Perfect Human Being) will be an everlasting seal on the treasure of another world.[49]

42 This is the idea of a receptacle which contains all the forms of the cosmos.

43 In theological and philosophical discussions, *fikra* in most cases designates syllogistic procedure. See, for example, the beginning of *Kitāb al-fikr* in the fourth volume of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*.

44 The notion that the human being is the vicegerent of God is attested in the Qurʾān (2:30).

45 For the connection between *naẓar* and *raḥma*, see Qurʾān 3:77 and its commentary.

46 By this sentence Ibn al-ʿArabī may mean either the eternal existence of the species against the transient life of each member of the species, or alternatively, the eternal form of human beings in opposition to the passing nature of their corporeal bodies. In any case, this seems to prove that the present chapter does not treat Ādam, but the human being in general. Takeshita, "The Theory of the Perfect Man," p. 91. However, our author immediately refers to the Perfect Human Being, who is Ādam. Yet, as seen on pages 75, 76, 199, and 120–122 of the Arabic text, the Perfect Human beings are the Sufi gnostics. Takeshita, ibid., pp. 93–97.

47 Since the human being is the symbol of the cosmos, from one point of view he is divided into parts, while from another point of view he is one essence. See my article "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Attitude toward al-Ghazālī," in *Avicenna and His Legacy*, ed. Y. Tzvi Langermann, Turnhout, Belgium 2009, pp. 105–107.

48 Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī's Summary," p. 8.

49 The notion that God creates numerous worlds in which one hundred thousand Ādams have existed appears in the *Futūḥāt* (Vol. VI, pp. 81, 369), in one of Ibn al-ʿArabī's visions. The Greatest Master seems to say that there is no possibility of nonexistence of

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All that exists in the divine forms,[50] that is, (God's) names, appears in the human structure. Hence these forms attained the rank of being encompassed and included in the existence of the human structure. And through this existence God argues against the angels.[51] So take care, because God teaches you a lesson through (telling you the story of) another, and think[52] what is the reason for blaming someone. That is, the angels were neither aware of the structure of this vicegerent nor of the essential servitude (*ʿibāda dhātiyya*) required by the presence of the Real. For no one knows about the Real except that which is given to him by one's essence.[53] The angels neither had the comprehensive (nature) of Ādam nor perceived the divine names (51) which particularize his nature and through which God is glorified and sanctified. Moreover, the angels did not know that God has (other) names by which they can glorify and sanctify Him as Ādam did. This situation which we have mentioned overwhelmed them and caused them to say concerning the structure of the human being: "How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed?" (Qurʾān 2:30, trans. AH). These words express only quarreling and the essence of their behavior, that is, what they said regarding Ādam equals their attitude toward the Real. If their structure had not imposed on them such (an ignorance of God's names), having been unaware of this imposition (*wa-hum lā yashʿurūn*),[54] they would not have said what they said concerning Ādam. If they had known their souls (or selves – *nufūs*), they would have known (their predisposition),[55] and if they had known, they would have been protected (*ʿuṣimū*) (from ascribing sins to the human being). Moreover, the angels did not cease disparaging Ādam, but added the claim that (contrary to Ādam) they glorify and sanctify God (Qurʿān 2:30). Ādam knew the divine Names which the angels did not know, hence they could neither glorify their Lord nor sanctify Him through these names as Ādam did.[56]

The Real described to us what happened (between Him and the angels) so that we know it and behave toward Him accordingly. Consequently, we shall not claim what we have realized and encompassed by limited (knowledge). How can we make, without restrictions, comprehensive claims of what we have no experience

a world, because any world is a manifestation of God. A world always exists with the Perfect Human Being as its seal. Cf. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 90.

50 Takeshita (*An Analysis*, p. 251, n. 48), basing himself on al-Kāshānī's and al-Nabulusī's commentaries, reads here *ṣūra* (image), and not *ṣuwar* as in Affifi's text.

51 The angels opposed the existence of Ādam, because he would cause damage and bloodshed on earth. Consequently, God showed the superiority of Ādam to them, for He taught Ādam the names of all existents. Qurʾān 2:30–33. Cf. Sells, *Mystical Languages*, p. 67.

52 Read *wa-nẓur* instead of *sa-anẓuru*.

53 Thus, through his own essence the human being learns about God.

54 This phrase is taken from the Qurʾān (7:95 and others) and designates the state of unawareness or heedlessness.

55 They would have known the limitations of their knowledge.

56 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, everything behaves in keeping with its fix or immutable entity (*ʿayn thābita*), and the angels are no exception to this rule. Thus, the angels cannot be blamed for acting in accordance with their basic structure. Our author ignores this logical difficulty, which can be found in other parts of the *Fuṣūṣ*.

and knowledge, for we will only be disgraced? This is the divine lesson (*taʿrīf* – literally: information) through which the Real educates His servants, the well mannered, the faithful, the vicegerents.

Let us now return to the Wisdom mentioned above and say: Know that the universals (*al-umūr al-kulliyya*), even if they have no concrete existence in themselves, they are undoubtedly perceived and known by the mind (*fī'l-dhihn*).[57] (Although) they are always hidden (*bāṭin*)[58] from the concrete existence (*wujūd ʿaynī*),[59] they determine and influence each concrete existent. Moreover, the concrete existents are related only to the universals, (by which) I mean the (fixed) entities of the concrete things. The universals are always intelligible in themselves. The universals are manifest[60] from the point of view of concrete existents and hidden from the point of view of their intelligibility. Every concrete existent is dependent on the universals, which cannot be disconnected from the intellect. The universals cannot exist in a concrete manner in such a way that (52) they cease to be intelligible. Whether the concrete existence is temporal or not, its relationship to the universal is one and the same. However, the universal serves as the source of the determining rule of the concrete existents according to the requirements of the latter's essences; (it is) like the relationship of knowledge to the knower and life to the living.[61] That is because life and knowledge are intelligible realities which differ from each other. We also say concerning the Real that He has knowledge and life, and hence He is knowing and living. We say regarding the angel that he has knowledge and life, hence he is knowing and living, and the same applies to the human being. The reality of knowledge is one, as is the reality of life, and the relationship of each of them to the knower and living, respectively, is one.

Regarding the knowledge of the Real we say that it is eternal (*qadīm*), while the knowledge of the human being is brought into being (*muḥdath*). Consider the determining rule which the relationship (between the act and its agent)[62] creates regarding the intelligible reality, and consider the connection between the intelligible and the concrete existents. Just as the knowledge determines that the entity in which it exists is called knower, so the knower (literally: the one who is described by knowledge – *al-mawṣūf bihi*) determines that the knowledge is brought into being regarding the knower who is brought into being, and that the

57 For the kinds of existents, see *Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir*, pp. 7–27.
58 Internal.
59 Chittick understands this term as an entified existence, that is, existence which is not in the mind. SPK, p. 83.
60 External.
61 Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to mean that, for example, the universal that is called knowledge entails the existence of one who knows, and this connection between the act (knowledge) and its subject (the knower) is part of the essence of knowledge. This paragraph on the universals is reminiscent of Aristotle's discussion on the universals. See, for example, *Metaphysics*, 1038a; D. M. Armstrong, *Universals: An Opinionated Introduction*, Boulder 1989.
62 By this phrase Ibn al-ʿArabī means the relationship between, for instance, knowledge and the knower.

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knowledge is eternal regarding the eternal (entity). Each of the two (knowledge and knower) is both determining and determined.[63]

It is known that even if the universals (*al-umūr al-kulliya*) are intelligible, they have no concrete existence,[64] but only the (power) of determination, as they are determined by the relationship to the concrete existent.[65] The universals are determined by the concrete existents,[66] but it is inconceivable that they should admit particularization and division, for they exist in their essences in each entity they qualify, as humanity exists in each individual of this particular species, being neither particularized nor (53) divided by the multiplicity of the individuals. (Even though the universals are present in concrete existents), they (the universals) remain intelligible. If the connection between that which has concrete existence and that which lacks such existence is proved (*thabata*), therefore this would be a nonexistent relationship (*wa-hiya nisba ʿadamiyya*),[67] then the connection between the concrete existents to each other is more easily perceived by the intellect, because the concrete existence unifies them, whereas in the former case (the connection between the concrete existents and the universals), there is no unifying element (*jāmiʿ*). Hence, there is a connection without a unifying element; however, a connection with a unifying element is stronger and more correct. There is no doubt that the bringing into being (*iḥdāth*) of that which is brought into being (*muḥdath*) and the need of the latter to a bringer into being (*muḥdith*) is proved, because the *muḥdath* is possible by virtue of itself.[68] Consequently, its existence derives from another, and it is connected to another with a connection of need (*irtibāṭ iftiqār*). The entity on which the *muḥdath* relies (for its existence) is undoubtedly a necessary existent by virtue of its essence (*bi-dhātihi*); for its existence, it does not need another entity. It is He (God) who bestows existence to this coming-into-being thing (*ḥādith*) by His essence and the *ḥādith* relies on Him (for its existence). Since God's Essence necessitates the existence of the *muḥdath*, the *muḥdath* is a necessary entity by virtue of God. Since the *ḥādith* relies on the entity from which it emerges, because of the

63 In other words, the existence of knowledge in one entails one's being a knower, and the characteristic of the knower as brought into being or eternal entails the characteristic of knowledge as brought into existence or eternal.

64 For Ibn al-ʿArabī concrete existence does not mean existence in the mind, but only existence outside one's mind, in the external world. I have no evidence that he knew of the doctrine of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 1164), who thought that existence in the mind is one of the forms of concrete existence (*wujūd fī'l-aʿyān*). *Al-Kitāb al-muʿtabar fī'l-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya*, Haydarabad 1939, Vol. III, p. 19.

65 The knowledge of concrete existents determines the form of their universals.

66 As he said above, the concrete existent may characterize the state of the universal.

67 The author seems to say that the relationship between the concrete things and the universals are not seen but perceived by the intellect.

68 A thing that is brought into existence is possible by virtue of itself and necessary by virtue of another. God is the necessary existent by virtue of itself (His essence), which means that no entity is the cause of His existence. In this characterization of the existents, Ibn al-ʿArabī follows other philosophers and theologians. See, for example, Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilāhiyyāt*, trans. M. E. Marmura, Utah 2005, Ch. 6; Al-Āmidī (d. 1233), *Ghāyat al-marām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. Ḥasan Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, Cairo 1971, pp. 48f.

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essence of this entity, (this connection between the *ḥādith* and its source) necessitates that the *ḥādith* reflects the source's form. (This means) that each name and attribute of the source is ascribed to the *ḥādith* except essential necessity (*wujūb dhātī*),[69] for the latter is inadmissible regarding the *ḥādith*; although the *ḥādith* is the necessary existent, it is necessitated by another, not by itself.

Moreover, you should know that since what we have said concerning the emergence of the human being in His form is right, God caused us to know Him through the observation of the *ḥādith* and pointed out that He showed us His signs in the *ḥādith*,[70] so we adduced evidence from ourselves about Him. The description through which we described Him was not but the description of ourselves, except for the unique essential necessity (which belongs to Him alone). Since we know Him through knowing ourselves and from ourselves, we ascribe to Him all that which we ascribe to ourselves. This (point is corroborated) by divine messages which come to us through the prophets (*tarājim*).[71] (In these messages) He described Himself for us through us. If we witness Him, we witness ourselves, and if He witnesses us, He witnesses Himself. We are doubtless many in terms of being (numerous) individuals and species. Even if one reality unites us, we definitely know that there is a difference through which individuals are distinguished from one another. If this (rule) did not exist, multiplicity would not subsist in one (entity). (54) Likewise, even if He describes us through what He describes Himself, that is, through all aspects, still there should be a difference, which is our need of Him for our existence and (the fact) that our existence depends on Him. This is because we are possible things, whereas He does not need that which we need. Consequently, it is right (to ascribe to) Him eternity and pre-existence, and to deny of Him antecedence, (which means) the beginning of existence from nonexistence. Although He is the First, antecedence is not ascribed to Him. For this reason, it is said of Him (He is) the Last.[72] If His antecedence were antecedence in the sphere of limited existence, it would be impossible that He should be the Last existent, for there is no last possible thing, because the possible things (*mumkināt*) are infinite, hence there is no last possible thing.[73] He is the Last, only because everything goes back to Him, after it has been attributed to us. Hence, essentially He is both the Last and the First.[74]

69 This means being necessitated by virtue of its essence.

70 Qur'ān 41:53: "We shall show them Our signs on the far horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses everything?" (trans. AH). For the concept of signs (*āyāt*) in the Qur'ān and Islamic theology, see Abrahamov, "Signs," *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, Leiden 2006, Vol. V, pp. 2–11.

71 For this use see SPK, p. 330. On p. 47, the word *mutarjim* (literally: translator) means transmitter.

72 Qur'ān 57:3: "He is the First and the Last, the Outward (*ẓāhir*) and the Inward (*bāṭin*)."

73 The possible things have no end, for they reflect God's essence, which is infinite.

74 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī expresses the notion of the twofold nature of God. Just as God is transcendent and immanent, depending on the aspect considered, in the same manner, He is the First and Last. He is the First, because all entities derive from Him, and He is the Last, because all entities return to Him.

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You should know that God characterized Himself as the Outward and the Inward and brought the world into existence in two forms – invisible and visible – so that we might perceive the Inward through the invisible (things) in ourselves and the Outward through the visible things in ourselves.[75] And He described Himself through satisfaction (*riḍā*) and anger (*ghaḍab*), and brought the world into existence as containing fear (*khawf*) and hope (*rajāʾ*), so that (people) would fear His anger and hope for His satisfaction. And He depicts Himself as beautiful and possessing majesty, and hence brought us into existence with (the attributes) of reverence (*hayba*) and intimacy (*uns*).[76] In this manner (one should understand) all that is ascribed to God and all His names. He expressed (each) pair of attributes by His two hands,[77] which turn from Him toward the creation of the Perfect Human Being, because he combines the realities of the world and its individual things. That is, because the world is visible (literally: witness – *shahāda*) and the vicegerent is invisible,[78] therefore the Ruler (God) is veiled. The Real describes Himself as (concealed) through dark veils, which are the natural bodies, and through luminous veils, which are the subtle spirits.[79] The universe is either dense (*kathīf*) or subtle (*laṭīf*), and it veils itself, hence it cannot perceive the Real as it perceives itself. It does not (55) cease (to be covered) by a veil which is not removed, knowing (*maʿa ilmihi*) that because of its need for its creator, it is distinct from Him. Moreover,[80] it has no part in the essential necessity which characterizes the existence of the Real, hence it will never perceive Him. The Real will never be known by the universe, either by mystical experience (*dhawq*) or by physical witness (*shuhūd*), for the created in time has no part in (the knowledge of the eternal).

God combined in Ādam (the pair of contradictory traits) to honor him. For this reason He said to Iblīs: "What prevented you from prostrating to (the human being) that I created with my two hands?" (Qurʾān 38:75) (Iblis did not prostrate himself), because Ādam combined in himself two forms: the form of the cosmos and the form

75 Since the structure of the human being reflects the cosmos, his hidden parts correspond to the cosmos's hidden parts and the same applies to his manifest parts. *Al-tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya fī iṣlāḥ al-mamlaka al-insāniyya,* in *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-*ʿArabī, ed. H. S. Nyberg, p. 108; trans. T. S. al-Jerrahi al-Halveti, *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom,* Louisville 1997, pp. 9–11.

76 One reveres God because of His majesty and wishes to be an intimate friend of God because of His beauty. Ibn al-ʿArabī wrote an epistle entitled *Kitāb al-jalāl wa'l-jamāl*. *Rasāʾil*, I, no. 2.

77 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī finds a solution to the anthropomorphic expression in Qurʾān 38:75, which reads: "God said: 'Iblīs, what prevents you from prostrating to (the human being) that I created with my two hands (*bi-yadayya*) . . . " God's two hands symbolize each pair of His attributes.

78 The explanation of the invisibility of the vicegerent appears immediately.

79 The notion that God is veiled by seventy veils of light and darkness is based on a *ḥadīth*. Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt al-anwār, The Niche of Lights: A Parallel English-Arabic text, translated, introduced, and annotated by David Buchman*, Provo, Utah, 1998, p. 44.

80 The text reads *wa-lakinna* (but, however), which does not make sense here.

of the Real; both are the two hands of the Real, while Iblīs is part of the cosmos which does not possess this combination. Therefore, Ādam was vicegerent, and if he were not manifest in the form of that which made him vicegerent for the purpose of his vicegerency, he would not be vicegerent. And if he did not combine in himself all that which the subjects, for whose sake he was made vicegerent, require from him, because they depend on him and hence he must implement what they need, he would not be their vicegerent. Consequently, vicegerency is valid only regarding the Perfect Human Being. Therefore, God created his manifest form from the realities of the cosmos and its forms, and his invisible form in the form of God. For this reason, God said of him: "I was his hearing and seeing," and He did not say, "I was his eye and ear."[81] He made a distinction between the two forms. (Just as the Real is in the Perfect Human Being), He is in each existent of the cosmos in the (same) measure that the reality of each existent requires. However, no existent possesses the combination (of traits) possessed by the vicegerent. He gained (this status of vicegerency) only because of this combination.

If the Real did not pervade the existents through (His) form, the cosmos would not exist. Likewise, if the universal intelligible realities did not exist, the concrete existents would not be determined.[82] Hence, from this truth (mentioned above) (we learn) the cosmos's need of God for its existence.

(56) All things need (God) and cannot dispense with (Him)/this is the truth that we express plainly

If you mention He who does not need (anything)/you know whom we mean

Everything is connected to everything without/ being separated, (so) learn from me what I say.

Now you know the wisdom of the creation (*nashʾa*) of Ādam, that is, his external form, and you know the creation of his spirit, that is, his internal form, and this is the truth regarding creation.[83] And you know the creation of his position which is the combination (of traits) that made him worthy of the vicegerency. Ādam is the single soul from which God created the human species. This (is attested) in God's saying: "Mankind, fear (*ittaqū*)[84] your Lord, who created you of a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them scattered abroad many men and women . . . (Qurʾān 4:1, trans. Arberry). His saying "fear (or beware)

81 Eye and ear are external and hence perceptible, while hearing and seeing are internal and hence imperceptible. The author refers to the tradition of supererogatory acts (*ḥadīth al-nawāfil*), according to which God rewards the believer who performs such acts "by becoming the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees . . . " Bukhārī, Vol. LXXXI, no. 38 (6502). Sells, *Mystical Languages*, p. 69. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Divine Sayings*, p. 70.

82 For its existence the cosmos first needs God's spirit (form) and second universal realities (ideas or the fixed entities – *aʿyān thābita*), which establish the forms of the existents.

83 Read: *al-ḥaqq fī'l-khalq*. *Sharḥ*, p. 38. Reading *fa-huwa al-ḥaqq al-khalq* (Affifi's edition) means "thus, he (Ādam) is both the Real and the creation," which coincides with the present context.

84 *Ittaqū* may also mean "beware."

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your Lord" (means) make your external side a protection for your Lord[85] and your internal side, that is God, a protection for you.[86] That is because the attitude toward human behavior consists of blame and praise; you should protect Him from blame (do not blame Him) and protect yourselves from praise (do not ascribe to yourselves praise), (only) then will you be well mannered and knowers.

Then, God showed Ādam what he placed in him, and he made it abide in two aspects relating to Ādam: the first aspect is the world and the second is Ādam and his progeny,[87] explaining the grades (of his progeny).

(The author) said: Since God showed me in secret what he placed in this great progenitor, I have recorded in this book what he established for me, not all of what I have been taught, for this (all the knowledge I was given) cannot be included in a book or in the world existing now. The following is what I witnessed, that is, what God's messenger deposited in this book as He established it for me:

1. The Wisdom of Divinity exists in the Essence of Ādam; This is the present chapter. 2. The Wisdom of Expiration exists in the Essence of Seth (Shīth); 3. The Wisdom of Transcendence exists in the Essence of Noah (Nūḥ); 4. The Wisdom of Holiness exists in the Essence of Enoch (Idrīs); 5. The Wisdom of Excessive Love exists in the Essence of Abraham (Ibrāhīm); 6. The Wisdom of Reality exists in the Essence of Isaac (Isḥāq); 7. The Wisdom of Loftiness exists in the Essence of Ishmael (Ismāʿīl); 8. The Wisdom of Spirituality exists in the Essence of Jacob (Yaʿqūb); 9. The Wisdom of Light exists in the Essence of Joseph (Yūsuf); 10. The Wisdom of Unity exists in the Essence of Hūd; 11. The Wisdom of Opening exists in the Essence of Ṣāliḥ; 12. The Wisdom of the Heart exists in the Essence of Shuʿayb; 13. The Wisdom of Spiritual Power exists in the Essence of Lot (Lūṭ); 14. The Wisdom of Predetermination exists in the Essence of Ezra ʿ(Uzayr); 15. The Prophetic Wisdom exists in the Essence of Jesus (ʿĪsā); 16. The Wisdom of Mercy exists in the Essence of Solomon (Sulaymān); 17. The Wisdom of Existence exists in the Essence of David (Dāʾūd); 18. The Wisdom of Breath exists in the Essence of Jonah (Yūnus); 19. The Wisdom of the Unseen exists in the Essence Job (Ayūb); 20. (58) The Wisdom of Majesty exists in the Essence of John (Yaḥyā); 21. The Wisdom of the Dominion exists in the Essence of Zakariah (Zakariyya); 22. The Wisdom of Intimacy exists in the Essence of Elias (Ilyās); 23. The Wisdom of Virtue exists in the Essence of Luqmān; 24. The Wisdom of Leadership exists in the Essence of Aaron (Hārūn); 25. The Wisdom of Exaltation exists in the Essence of Moses (Mūsā); 26. The Wisdom of Recourse exists in the Essence of Khālid; 27. The Wisdom of Uniqueness exists in the Essence of Muḥammad.

85 Probably by this phrase Ibn al-ʿArabī means that God is protected from any accusation concerning human behavior which derives from the humans' external aspect. In other words, beware of ascribing to God your sins. *Sharḥ*, p. 38.

86 You are not responsible for the good deeds which emanate from you. Do not ascribe them to yourselves, but to God.

87 Ādam reflects in his essence the whole cosmos, and in addition he is the source of all generations to come.

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The bezel of each kind of wisdom is the essence ascribed to it.[88] In the kinds of wisdom I mentioned in this book, I limited myself to what was established in the Source of the Book (*umm al-Kitāb*).[89] I copied what the Messenger dictated to me and did not go beyond what was established for me. Even if I wished to increase (the contents given to me) I would not be able to do so, for God's presence (*ḥaḍra*) prevents this action. It is God Who grants success, and there is no Lord except Him.

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88 Very probably, by "it" the author means each prophet, although the pronoun of *ilā* (to) is in the feminine (*ilayhā*), Ibn al-ʿArabī might have thought on the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of a prophet to which the essence is ascribed.

89 Qur'ān 43:4, 13:39, trans. AH. The source of the book is equivalent to the Preserved Tablet, the heavenly scripture, from which the Qur'ān was taken. This is another allusion of Ibn al-ʿArabī to the divine character of the *Fuṣūṣ* and to his status as one who, like prophets, receives revelation from Heaven.

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2 The bezel of the wisdom of expiration[1] exists in the essence of Seth

Know that the external gifts and grants in the world, which are (given) through people and not through them, are divided into two kinds: gifts deriving from the Essence (of God) and gifts deriving from His Names. The people of mystical experience (*ahl al-adhwāq*) distinguish between them. Also, the two kinds of gifts (are given) in answer to a specific or a nonspecific request. (Moreover), there are gifts, whether of the Essence or of the Names, which are (59) (given) without request. One who wants a specific gift will ask: "O my Lord, give me such a thing, and he will specify a certain thing, not another." One who wants a nonspecific gift will say: "Give me what You know is in my (best) interest for any part of my being, whether subtle or dense," without specifying a certain thing.

Those who ask are divided into two kinds: those who are motivated to ask because of natural (inclination) to hasten (matters) (*istiʿjāl ṭabīʿī*), for the human being was created hasty (*khuliqa ʿajūlan*);[2] and those who are urged to request, for they know that there are things belonging to God that cannot be attained (except and) only after a request. And he (one of this group) says (to himself) perhaps what we ask God is of this kind. Hence, his request (expresses) a precautionary measure, because of the possibility that there are things which God can give (but) only on request. That is because he cannot know what God knows, nor can he know what his predisposition (*istiʿdād*) permits him to receive, because one of the obscure objects of knowledge (*aghmaḍ al-maʿlūmāt*) is (knowing) one's predisposition in each instant at that moment. However, if the predisposition did not make him request (something), he would not request (it).

The best knowledge attained by the People of Presence (*ahl al-ḥuḍūr*) with God,[3] who do not know (their predisposition), is the knowledge of (their gift) at the moment of its reception. Because they are present with God, they know what God grants them at this time and that they receive it through their predisposition.

1 After stating in the first chapter that Ādam's role was to unify all the realities in himself, the second chapter ascribes to Seth God's self-manifestation of His power of creation, which is exemplified in the act of expiration (*nafth*).

2 This sentence is a combination of two Qurʿānic verses: " . . . Man is ever hasty" (*wa-kāna al-insān ʿajūlan* – Qurʾān 11:17) and "Man was created hasty . . . " (*khuliqa al-insān min ʿajal* – Qurʾān 21:37).

3 SPK, p. 105.

They are divided into two kinds: those who know from what they have received (what) their predisposition is, and those who know from their predisposition what they may receive. The latter is more complete than the former. Among those who belong to the second kind are certain people who ask, neither because they want to hasten (the reception of the gift) nor because there are many possible things (to be given), but only to obey God's command in His saying: "If you call on Me, I will answer you" (Qurʾān 40:60). Whoever does so is a pure servant. That is because this requester (*al-dāʿī*) has no aspiration (*himma*),[4] whether specific or not, which is connected with what he requests, but he wishes to obey his Lord's command. If his state requires (making a) request, he will ask servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*), and if his state requires the entrusting (of his affairs to God) and silence, he will be silent. Job (Ayūb) and others were afflicted by suffering, and they did not ask God to remove their affliction. (60) Then, at another time, their state required them to request the removal of it, and God removed it from them.

Hastening or slowing down the answer (depends) on the predetermined answer appointed by God for those who ask. If the request fits the moment predetermined for its answer, God hastens to answer, and if the time (of request) is delayed, whether in this world or until the world to come, the answer is also delayed. (What is delayed is) the thing requested, not the answer, for God is at the human being's service, hence you should understand this.[5]

By the second kind of request, "There are (gifts) that are given without request," I mean an articulated request, for essentially there must be a request, whether through articulation, a spiritual state, or a predisposition. Likewise, undefined praising (*ḥamd muṭlaq*)[6] is never valid unless it is articulated; however, a spiritual state necessarily restricts praising when it refers to a (specific) meaning. The (knowledge) which urges you to praise God is the (knowledge) which limits (your praise) through a name of action (*ism fiʿl*) or of transcendence (*ism tanzīh*).[7] One is not aware of one's predisposition, but of one's spiritual state, because one knows the motive which is the state, for predisposition is a more hidden (form of) request. Only the knowledge that God predetermined (their actions) prevents such people from requesting God. They prepare their substrate to receive whatsoever comes from God, their souls and their aims being concealed from them.[8]

4 See p. 14, n. 4.

5 If all things and events are predetermined by God, then the suitability of the request to the answer is also determined. Thus, there is no possibility of man's choosing his actions freely in this system. Even one's thoughts and evaluations regarding one's actions can be considered as decreed by God.

Dr. Avraham Elqayam suggests that the word *ifham* ("understand"!) signifies the end of an esoteric or profound discussion that one should deliberate on. See, for example, ch. 12, 14, 17.

6 By this phrase, Ibn al-ʿArabī may be suggesting general praise, like "you are good," without particularizing a specific trait.

7 When one knows God's names and actions, one praises Him by using words that are connected with these names.

8 They are not aware of their feelings and objectives, for they are waiting only for God's gifts.

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Among those persons there are those who know that God's knowledge of them in all their states equals the knowledge of their fixed entity before their existence. They know that the Real does not confer (on the concrete entities) but what the fixed entity[9] confers and they know the source of God's knowledge of them.

Among the people of God (*ahl allāh*),[10] this kind of people (who do not request) are higher and more receptive to revelation than others, because they perceive the mystery of God's predetermination (*sirr al-qadar*).[11] They are divided into two groups: those who know it (the mystery) in a general way (*mujmalan*), and those who know it in a detailed manner (*mufaṣṣalan*). One who knows it in a detailed way is higher and more complete than one who knows it in a general way, for the former knows that which God knows about him, whether through God's notification to him of the knowledge latent in his fixed entity or His revelation to him of his fixed entity whose states are endless and ever-changing. (61) Such a one is higher than the one who knows in a general way. That is because his knowledge of himself is like God's knowledge of him, for the source of knowledge is one.[12]

However, from the point of view of the servant, (his knowledge of himself) derives from God's previous providence, which consists of God's revelation to him of all the states of his entity.[13] When God makes the created being know the fixed states of his entity, he knows them as (concrete) existents, and he cannot know them in the state of their absence (from concrete existence),[14] for they are essential relationships[15] (*nisab*) having no form. In this respect we say that the two kinds of knowledge (God's and the human being's) are equal and originate in God's previous providence. That is why God said: "(We will try you) until we know (which of you do his best)" (Qurʾān 47:31). The phrase "until we know" has a very clear meaning, not as the meaning imagined by those who have no mystical inclination (*mashrab*). The best the one who holds God's transcendence (can do) is to state that the cause of the created knowledge is its connection (to the created beings). In the gift issue, this would be the best way of the rationalist, if he did not affirm knowledge as something added to God's essence and ascribed the connection to the created beings and not to the Essence. Through this (direction), the

9 See p. 17, n. 34.
10 See p. 15, n. 12.
11 The mystery of God's predetermination is based on the following tradition: "Do not speak of anything relating to *qadar*, for it is God's secret, so do not disclose God's secret." Al-Lālakāʾī, Abū al-Qāsim Hibat Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan, *Sharḥ uṣūl iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna waʾl-jamāʿa min al-kitāb waʾl-sunna wa-ijmāʿ al-ṣaḥāba waʾl-tābiʿīn min baʿdihim*, ed. Aḥmad Saʿd Ḥamdān, Makka AH 1402 (AD 1981), Vol. II, p. 629. B. Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology – Traditionalism and Rationalism*, Edinburgh 1998, p. 10.
12 It is one's fixed entity.
13 Our author testifies to his own experience of receiving God's revelation on his future states and acts. Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier*, p. 127.
14 He knows them only as they appear in concrete forms and not as ideas in God.
15 By relationships Ibn al-ʿArabī means attributes (*ṣifāt*). SPK, p. 52. Thus, the fixed entities or the archetypes are like God's attributes; that is, they are not concrete spiritual beings, which would injure God's absolute unity.

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rationalist is distinguished from the Verifier, the one, among the people of God, who receives revelation and has the capability of finding (*wujūd*) the truth.[16]

Let us now return to the (subject) of (divine) gifts, which we say derive either from God's Essence or Names. As for the gifts and donations which come from the Essence, they always originate in divine revelation. Revelation originating in the Essence is always only through the predisposition of the recipient of the revelation, not through any other way. Thus, the recipient of revelation sees only his own form in the mirror of the Real; he does not see the Real, and it is impossible to see the Real, although he knows that he sees his form only in the Real. This is comparable to a mirror in the concrete existence; if you see a form in it, you will not see the mirror itself, although you know that you see forms or your form only in it.[17] God manifests this as a simile of the revelation of His essence (62), so that the recipient will know that he does not see God. There is no simile closer and more similar to vision and revelation than this. When you see a form in the mirror, try as you may to see the substance of the mirror, you can never see it. This is so true that some people, who perceived such a phenomenon concerning the forms seen in mirrors, thought that the form observed is placed between the beholder and the mirror. This is the best (theory) that can be known, though the matter is as we have said and thought. We have explained it in *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*.[18] If you have tasted this matter, you have tasted the utmost degree (of knowledge) beyond which no higher degree (can be reached by) the created being. Hence, do not strive and weary yourself (by trying) to ascend to a higher degree than this, for He is not there at all, and beyond this degree there is only pure non-existence (*al-ʿadam al-maḥḍ*). God is your mirror, through which you see yourself, and you are His mirror through which He sees His names and the manifestation of their rules, and these names are nothing other than Himself.[19]

The matter became confused and obscure: Some of us are ignoramuses and say: "The inability to perceive is perception." Some others among us know, but say nothing at all, and this is the best reaction (literally: saying): knowledge causes them to be silent, not incapable. (One who is silent) is the best knower of God. This knowledge belongs only to the Seal of Messengers and the Seal of God's Friends (or Saints). None of the prophets and messengers can perceive (this knowledge),

16 The question is how to explain God's knowledge of the entities which are brought into being. In other words, how this knowledge is related to God without infringing on His eternity and unity. The verifier knows by revelation that God's eternity and unity are not impaired, while the rationalist knows the same idea by ascribing the change in knowledge not to God but to the created beings. God knows from eternity what will exist and act in the cosmos, and there is no change in his knowledge. *Futūḥāt*, ch. 411, Vol. 7, pp. 23f.

17 Exactly, when you focus your gaze on the form in the mirror, you do not see the mirror, although you are aware of its existence.

18 *Futūḥāt*, Vol. I, p. 249 (ch. 17).

19 The last phrase echoes the Ibn Kullab's theory of God's attributes, according to which the attributes are neither identical to God's essence nor other than His essence. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, pp. 208f. This doctrine was adopted by the Ashʿarites, as attested by Ibn al-ʿArabī. *Futūḥāt*, Vol. V, p. 406 (ch. 360).

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except through the light-niche (*mishkāt*)[20] of the Seal of Messengers. (Likewise) none of God's Friends can perceive it, except through the light-niche of the Seal of God's Friends, so that the messengers do not perceive it – even when they perceive it – except through the light-niche of God's Friends. That is, because messengerhood and prophecy – I mean the prophecy of legislation and its messengerhood – come to an end, while sainthood (*walāya*) never ends.[21] Because the messengers are God's Friends, they do not perceive that which we have mentioned, except through the light-niche of the Seal of God's Friends, the more so concerning those who are more inferior than God's Friends. Even if the Seal of God's Friends follows the Law promulgated by the Seal of Messengers, this does not infringe his (Muḥammad) status nor contradict that which we have said, for from one vantage point he is inferior as he is superior from another. Accounts that appear in our plain religious sources (*ẓāhir sharʿinā*) (63) as regards the superiority of ʿUmar's judgment of Badr's prisoners[22] and the pollination of palms[23] support our view.

The perfect one is not necessarily superior in every respect and rank. People consider superiority in terms of the degree one can know God and (strive) to achieve this end. They must not think about the contingent beings. Understand what we have said!

The Prophet likened prophethood to a complete brick wall, except for one brick, and he was the (missing) brick. Muḥammad saw only one missing brick, while the Seal of God's Friends (*khātam al-awliyāʾ*), who necessarily experienced this vision of the Prophet's likening, saw two missing bricks, one made of gold and the other of silver. He saw that when these two bricks are in place, the wall is complete, and when they are missing, the wall is incomplete. He necessarily regarded himself as the two missing bricks needed to complete the wall.

The reason that entails his seeing two bricks is his following outwardly the Law of the Seal of Messengers, and this is the place of the silver brick. It is the outward aspect, (meaning) the rules that he follows. In like manner he learns from God inwardly that which he follows outwardly, for he necessarily contemplates things as they really are.[24] Regarding the inward aspect, this is the place of the golden brick. He and the angel, who reveals (messages) to the Messenger, acquire their knowledge from the same source.

If you understand what I have pointed to, you will attain beneficial knowledge of everything. That is because every prophet from Ādam to the last prophet has acquired his knowledge from the Niche of the Seal of Prophets. Even if the corporeal existence of a prophet comes late, (64) his reality (*ḥaqīqa*) always exists, and

20 Cf. Qurʾān 24:35. When a lamp is placed in a niche, the light becomes stronger.

21 *Walāya* (proximity to God, friendship, sainthood) is the basic trait of prophets and saints. As such, it never ends, because nearness to God never ends. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, ch. 3.

22 Qurʾān 8:67–68; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, Beirut 1970, Vol. III, pp. 345f.

23 A. Guillaume, *Life of Muhammad*, Oxford 1955, p. 301.

24 By this Ibn al-ʿArabī means that the Seal of God's Friends contemplates both the internal and the external aspect of God's Law.

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the (following) saying of the Prophet (corroborates this idea): "I was a prophet when Ādam was between the water and the clay."[25] Others became prophets only when they were sent. Likewise, the Seal of God's Friends became God's Friend while Ādam was between water and clay, and others became God's Friends only when they fulfilled the conditions of God's Friendship (*walāya*); that is, the divine qualities they assumed, because God called Himself the Praised Friend (*al-walī al-ḥamīd*).[26]

As regards his *walāya*, the Seal of Messengers relates to the Seal of God's Friends as the prophets and messengers relate to the Seal of God's Friends, for he (Muḥammad) is God's friend, messenger and prophet.

As for the Seal of God's Friends, he is the *walī*, the heir who learns from the (divine) source and witnesses (all) the ranks (of being or of God's Friends). The *walāya* is one of the merits (*ḥasana*) of the Seal of Messengers, Muḥammad, the first in the community and the lord of Ādam's offspring regarding the opening of the gate of intercession (*shafāʿa*).[27] Only Muḥammad among the prophets was assigned to this state of intercession. In this unique state he precedes the Divine Names, for the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) does not intercede with the Avenger of the people of trial (*ahl al-balāʾ*)[28] until intercession is made with them. Muḥammad attained supremacy in this unique rank. He, who understands the spiritual degrees and stations,[29] will not find it difficult for him to accept this idea.

As for the gifts deriving from God's names, know that God's bestowal (of these gifts) on his creatures shows His mercy toward them; all these gifts derive from His names. (This mercy is divided into two kinds.) Either it is pure mercy such as good and pleasant sustenance in this world, which is (also) pure in the Resurrection.[30] The name the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) gives this sustenance, and it is a merciful bestowal. Or it is a mixed[31] mercy, such as drinking repugnant medicine which, however, relieves. This is a divine bestowal which cannot be made except through one of the guardians of the names. Sometimes God bestows on the servant (a gift) through (His name) the Merciful, and the gift is free of a mixture which does not fit the servant's nature at a certain time, or does not cause the attainment of his aim, or something similar. Sometimes God bestows (65) (a gift) through

25 I did not find this tradition in the canonical collections. For a similar tradition, see SPK, p. 239.
26 Qurʾān 42:28.
27 According to Muslim dogma, no Muslim who carried out a grave sin (*kabīra*) would stay forever in Hell, because the Prophet would plead for him. Al-Ājurrī, *Al-Sharīʿa*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, Beirut 1983, pp. 331–359.
28 I assume that by this phrase the author means "the people of Hell" with whom intercession is made.
29 Ibn al-ʿArabī may allude to his view that an individual can excel another in one aspect and be inferior in another.
30 Probably by "pure" the Greatest Master means that this sustenance was not obtained by unlawful acts or, and this seems most likely, that it is not a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant things.
31 It is a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant things.

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(His name) the All-Encompassing (*al-wāsiʿ*),[32] so that (His bestowal) is general, or through (His name) the Wise (*al-ḥakīm*) to serve the best interests (*al-aṣlaḥ*) (of the people) at a certain time. Or He may bestow through His name the Bestower (*al-wahhāb*) in such a way that the recipient is not obliged to respond either by (expressing) gratitude or carrying out an action. Or He may bestow through His name the Almighty (*al-jabbār*), as it relates to a certain place (*mawṭin*) and its requirements.[33] Or He may bestow through His name the Forgiver (*al-ghaffār*), observing the true state (of the sinner). If the sinner deserves punishment, He will forgive him, and if he does not deserve punishment, he will protect him from a sin. Hence he will be called "immune" (*maʿṣūm*), "protected from sins," and other names of a similar kind.

The giver is God, because He is the guardian of His treasuries. He brings forth (gifts) only in a known measure (*qadr maʿlūm*) and only in a name unique to each gift. "He gives everything its (appropriate measure of) creation (*khalqahu*)"[34] (Qurʾān 20:50) according to the name Just (*ʿadl*) and other names like it.

God's names are infinite, because they are known through the infinite things which derive from them, even if their sources are finite principles; that is, the foundations of the names (*ummahāt al-asmāʾ*) or the presences of the names (*ḥaḍarāt al-asmāʾ*).[35]

Truly, there is only one Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) which receives all these relations and attributions which are called the Divine Names. The Reality grants to every name, which appears endlessly, an essence (*ḥaqīqa*)[36] by which a name is distinguished from (all) others. This peculiar essence constitutes the name itself, not (the characteristics) the name shares with others. Likewise, gifts differ from each other through their distinctive characteristics (*shakhsiyya*); even though they derive from the same source, it is known that each differs from (all) others. The reason for this is the distinction of the names, for a thing never repeats itself because of the expansion of the divine domain. This is the truth on which one relies (*yuʿawwalu ʿalayhi*).[37]

This is the knowledge of Seth. Seth's spirit supplies any spirit that talks (66) about this (idea) with this knowledge, except for the Seal's spirit, because the Seal

32 For this name see, for example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ asmāʾ allāh al-ḥusnā*, ed. Taha ʿAbd al-Raʾuf Saʿd, Beirut 1990, pp. 282–284.

33 By this the author may mean God's control over every place on earth.

34 SDG, pp. XXIVf.

35 By the foundations (literally: the mothers) of the names, Ibn al-ʿArabī very probably means the seven basic attributes: the Living (*ḥayy*), the Omniscient (*ʿalīm*), the Willer (*murīd*), the Omnipotent (*qādir*), the Speaker (*mutakallim*), the All-Seeing (*baṣīr*), and the All-Hearing (*samīʿ*). And by the presences of the names, he may mean the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God.

36 It is worth noting that Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the same terms with different meanings even in the same paragraph. Here the Reality designates God, whereas *ḥaqīqa* in the context of God's names means the essence of the name. For this phenomenon, see Addas, p. 208.

37 Cf. the title of one of Ibn al-ʿArabī's books: The Book of Things One Must Not Rely On (*lā yuʿawwalu ʿalayhi*). *Rasāʾil*, I.

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receives this knowledge (literally: the material – *al-mādda*) only from God, not from a spirit. Moreover, it is from the Seal's spirit that this knowledge (passes) to all the spirits. If the Seal does not comprehend this (procedure) through himself at the moment of the composition (*tarkīb*) of his material body, he knows all this, as it is, through his essence and rank. From the point of view of his material composition, he is ignorant. Thus, he is the knower and the ignorant (at the same time). He is described through contraries, just as the Source (God) is described as the Beautiful and the Majestic, the Manifest and the Hidden, the First and the Last. This (joining of contraries) signifies his essence, and not another (trait). He knows and does not know, he comprehends and does not comprehend, he witnesses and does not witness.

Because of this knowledge, Seth was named "God's gift," which is the meaning of Seth.[38] In his hand is the key to gifts of different kinds and attributions. First this key was given to Ādam, and that which Seth received is from Ādam, because the son is the secret of his father;[39] from the father he emerges and to him he returns. To him who has understanding from God, nothing is strange in this giving. Every gift in this world takes the same course of giving. Every gift derives from God and there is nothing which does not come from Him, even if the forms (of gifts) are various. Not all persons know this and that this is the truth; only a very few of the people of God (know this). If you see one who knows it, rely on him, for this one is the very purest individual of the choicest of the elite (*ʿayn ṣafāʾ khulāṣt khāṣat al-khāṣa*) among the people of God. Every gnostic (literally: one who possesses unveiling – *ṣāḥib kashf*) who contemplates a form which gives him knowledge he did not possess before (must know) that this knowledge originates in himself, and in no other (entity). It is from the tree of his own self that he garners the fruit of his knowledge. It is like a manifest form which faces a polished surface (and is seen in it), not another (form is seen in it). However, the substrate or the plane (*ḥaḍra*) in which he sees his form may change owing to the shape of this plane; a big thing may appear as a little thing in a little mirror, and (a short thing may appear) as a long thing (in a long mirror), and (a resting thing) may appear as a moving thing (in a moving mirror). A unique plane may cause the reverse (67) form to be seen, or may reflect the exact thing which it faces, in such a way that the right side is seen as right from the point of view of the seer. However, in general, the right side appears in the mirror as the left side. But in exceptional cases, the right side appears as a right side. All this applies to the traits of the essence of the plane wherein (things) appear; this is the plane which we compare to a mirror. Whoever knows his predisposition, knows that which he receives. Not everyone who knows that which he receives knows his predisposition except after he receives, even though he knows this (his predisposition) in a general way.

38 Seth does not appear in the Qurʾān. Cl. Huart and C.E. Bosworth, "Shīth," EI2. Very probably Ibn al-ʿArabī knew the meaning of the name which is given in Genesis 4:25: "And Adam knew his wife again: and she bore a son, and called his name Seth; For God, said she, has given (*shat*) me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

39 The son is the hidden entity of the father.

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However, some people of speculation (*ahl al-naẓar*) who are weak-minded hold that since it has been proved that God does what he wants, it is possible for Him to do things contrary to wisdom and to the real state of things. Consequently, some speculative thinkers come to deny possibility (or contingency – *imkān*) and to affirm the necessity through the Essence or through another (entity).[40] One who verifies (*al-muḥaqqiq*)[41] affirms possibility and its attendance (*ḥaḍra*);[42] he knows what the possible thing is, what turns it into a possible thing and that it is necessary by virtue of another. (He also knows) why it is legitimate to designate that which requires the necessity of another thing. Only those who know God are aware of the distinction between (these terms).

The last-born individual of the human species will follow the footsteps of Seth and bear Seth's mysteries. There will be no other offspring of this species and he will be its seal. His sister will be born with him, and he will emerge after her, his head lying at her feet. He will be born in China and speak Chinese. Infertility will spread among men and women, and there will be many marriages without procreation. He will call them to God, but they will not respond. When God will make him and the believers of his time die, those who remain will live like animals, not permitting the lawful and not prohibiting the unlawful. They will behave as dictated by nature and passion without any regard for intellect or religion. Because of them the Last Hour will take place.

40 They deny the existence of possible things and the fact that things are necessary through other things and affirm that only God makes things necessary through His Essence. Cf. B. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988), especially pp. 95f.

41 This is the one who knows the truth for certain. SPK, p. 389, n. 11.

42 Here the word *ḥaḍra* appears in a different meaning.

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3 The bezel of the wisdom of transcendence[1] exists in the essence of Noah

Know, may God inspire you through His spirit, that according to the people of truth (*ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq*), transcendence (*tanzīh*) concerning the Divine amounts to limitation and restriction.[2] Whoever believes in God's transcendence (*munazzih*) is either foolish or ill mannered. If he, as a believer in religion, holds (this doctrine) unreservedly and believes in it and does not take into consideration something else, he misbehaves, denies the truth and the messengers, without being aware of this (consequence). He imagines that he is right, but he is wrong. He is like one who believes in parts (of religion) and disbelieves in others,[3] especially if he knows that divine expressions in the Scriptures that speak of the Real convey easily understood meanings to the common people (*ʿumūm*), but to the elite (*khuṣūṣ*) (they convey) all meanings that are comprehensible according to the aspects of a certain phrase in the ordinary usage of a given language.

The Real is manifest in every created and comprehended (*maʃhūm*) thing, and He is hidden from all comprehension, except for the comprehension of the one who holds that the cosmos is His form and ipseity (*huwiyya*). The cosmos is His manifest name, just as He is in another sense the spirit of that which is manifest, and this spirit means His being hidden. The Real's relationship to the manifest forms of the cosmos is like the relationship of the spirit that governs a form. Concerning the definition of the human being and of any other being, we can speak of the manifest and the hidden aspects. The Real (in his manifest aspect) can be defined by every definition, for the forms of the cosmos are infinite and cannot

1 *Subbūḥ* is an attribute of God which denotes His transcendence of any trait relating to the cosmos. Chittick, "The Chapter Headings," p. 9. The Real in respect to His Essence has no connection to the cosmos; however, in respect to His names and attributes, He permeates the cosmos. According to our author, the truth lies in accepting both God's transcendence and immanence. Affifi, II, pp. 31–33. Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes between two kinds of transcendence. The first is *ḥikma subūḥiyya*, which denotes purifying God from partners and imperfections, while the second is *ḥikma qudūsiyya* (see the title of ch. 4), which signifies removing from God all traits of the possible things. Izutsu, pp. 51f.

2 When you can say nothing about God, because He is transcendent, you limit your knowledge of Him.

3 Qurʾān 4:150.

be encompassed. The definitions of every form of the cosmos cannot be known but through the measure of the knowledge of the form of the cosmos that one possesses. Consequently, the definition of the Real is not known, for His definition cannot be attained except through the knowledge of every form, which is impossible. Therefore, the definition of the Real is inconceivable.

(69) Likewise, whoever holds the Real's immanence (*shabbaha*) and does not hold His transcendence (*nazzaha*) limits and restricts Him and does not know Him. Whoever combines in his knowledge transcendence and immanence in a general way, for it is inconceivable to know the cosmos in detail, because one cannot embrace all the forms of the cosmos, knows the cosmos in a general way but not in detail, just as he knows himself in general but not in detail. For this reason, the Prophet connected knowledge of the Real with knowledge of the self (or soul), saying: "Whoever knows himself (or his soul) knows his Lord" (*man ʿarafa nafsahu ʿarafa rabbahu*).[4] And God said: "We shall show them Our signs on the horizons," meaning the outside world, "and in themselves (or in their souls)," meaning the inside world, "until it becomes evident to them," meaning to the observer, "that He is the Real" (Qurʾān 41:53), in that you are His form, and He is your spirit.[5] You relate to Him, as your bodily form relates to you, and He relates to you as the spirit that governs the form of your body. Your definition includes both the external and the internal aspects, for if the spirit that governs the form of your body disappears, you are no longer called a human being; concerning this form, it is said that it has the form of a human being, which does not differ from a form of wood or of stone. The name "human being" applies to this form only figuratively, not in reality. However, the Real never disconnects Himself from the forms of the cosmos. Just as the human being when alive is defined by the spirit in reality and not in a figurative way, so the cosmos is defined by the Divinity.

Just as the external form of the human being praises with its unique language[6] its spirit and soul which govern it, so God makes the forms of the cosmos praise Him. But we are not able to understand their praise, because we cannot encompass all the forms of the cosmos. All the praises come from the languages of the Real which express His praise. For this reason, God says: "Praise belongs to God, the Lord of (all) existents (*ʿālamīn*),"[7] meaning that He is the source of all praises, hence He is both the one who praises and the one praised.

> (70) If you hold transcendence, you restrict Him/and if you hold immanence, you limit Him
>
> If you hold the two doctrines, you are right/and you will be a leader and a master in knowledge

4 For this dictum, see A. Altmann, "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism," in Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, New York 1969, pp. 1–40.

5 See p. 22, n. 7.

6 The body has a specific language through which it expresses its praises.

7 Qurʾān 1:1. Most of the commentators regard the word *ʿālamīn* (literally: worlds) as designating all existents, except for God. See, for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, Beirut 1970, Vol. I, p. 43.

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> Whoever holds His being as two things is a polytheist/and whoever holds that He is one unifies Him
>
> Beware of likening Him if you hold duality/and of making Him transcendent if you unify Him
>
> You are not He, but you are He and you see Him[8]/in the essences of things both boundless and restricted.[9]

God said: "There is nothing like Him" (Qurʾān 42:11), thus making Himself transcendent, and "He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing" (ibid.), thus likening Himself to creation. (However), when He says "there is nothing like His likeness (*kamithlihi*)," He likens Himself to creation[10] and makes Himself two, and when He says "the All-Hearing the All-Seeing," He makes Himself transcendent and united.[11]

If Noah had combined the two calls[12] to his people, they would have answered him. (However), he first called them to the external (doctrine of transcendence) then to the internal (doctrine of immanence)[13] and then said to them: "Ask forgiveness of your Lord, for He is always Forgiving" (Qurʾān 71:10). And he said: " . . . I have called my people night and day, but the more I call them, the further they run away" (Qurʾān 71:5, 6, trans. AH). He said that his people did not want to hear his call, for they knew that they should respond to it. Those who know God apprehend what Noah pointed out regarding his people; this was praise in the form of blame. They (those who know God) understand that the people did not respond to his call only because his call separated (*furqān*)[14] (between the transcendent and the immanent aspects of the Reality), whereas one should combine the two aspects (*qurʾān*) and not separate (*furqān*) them. Whoever holds a combination (of the two aspects) does not pay attention to separation even if he is in a state of separation, because the combination includes the separation and not vice versa. For this reason, only Muḥammad and this community, which is the "best community singled out for people" (Qurʾān 3:110), were distinguished by the Qurʾān. (The verse) "There is nothing like Him" (Qurʾān 42:11) combines the two aspects in one place. If Noah had uttered this verse, they would have answered him, for the Qurʾān likens (God to creation) and does not liken (Him) in the same verse, moreover even in half a verse.

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī here refers to the question of the One and the Many. From one point of view the cosmos is identified with the Real, because it is His manifestation, but from another point of view it is different, because it is created. Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, p. 12. This doctrine will also be dealt with in ch. 4.

9 These stanzas were also translated by Affifi in his *Mystical Philosophy*, p. 21.

10 He likens Himself, because the Qurʾān says that God has a like.

11 That is because only God has such absolute traits.

12 That is, the call for a transcendent God and the call for an immanent God.

13 Cf. Qurʾān 71:8, 9.

14 Here *furqān* does not appear as a synonym of al-Qurʾān in the meaning of redemption, but rather as an infinitive of *faraqa* (he divided, separated), while *qurʾān* derives from the verb *qaraʾa* (he connected, joined, combined).

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Noah called his people at night (71), (which symbolizes) their intellect and spirituality, for they are hidden. Also he called them by day, (which symbolizes) their external forms and senses.[15] However, he did not combine the external and the internal aspects as in "there is nothing like Him." As a result, their innermost perception repelled (Noah's call) because of this separation (between the two aspects), and his call increased their running away.[16] Then he spoke about himself, (revealing) that he called them so that God would forgive (*li-yaghfira lahum*) them, not that He would reveal to them (the two aspects). They understood that which he (Noah) told them. For this reason, they "thrust their fingers into their ears and covered their heads with their garments" (Qurʾān 71:7, trans. AH). All this is the form of covering (*satr*)[17] to which he called them, and they responded to his call in an active manner, not by yielding to God. In the verse "There is nothing like Him," there is both affirmation and negation of likeness to God. Muḥammad spoke about this point of having been given (the knowledge) of the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).[18] Muḥammad did not call his people at night and by day (separately), but rather at night by day and by day at night.[19]

In his wisdom, Noah said to his people: "He will send down abundant rain from the sky for you" (Qurʾān 71:11, trans. AH); that is, (various kinds) of intellectual knowledge regarding the meanings (of things), and reflection, "and He will give you wealth (*amwāl*)" (ibid., 12, trans. AH), through which He will incline you toward Him (*yamīlu bi-kum ilayhi*).[20] When He inclines you toward Him, you will see your form in Him. However, he among you who imagines that he sees Him does not know, and he among you who knows that he sees himself is the knower. For this reason, people are divided into those who do not know and those who know. And "his offspring" (*waladuhu*, ibid., 21) is the fruit of their reflection. The knowledge of this issue[21] is based on revelation (*mushāhada*) and is far removed from the fruits of reflection. ("Their wealth and children) will increase their ruin" (ibid.) and "their trade reaps no profit" (Qurʾān 2:16, trans. AH). What they grasp, that is, what they imagined was their property, has disappeared. Concerning the Muḥammadans,[22] (it is said in

15 "My Lord, I have called my people night and day" (Qurʾān 71:5, trans. AH).
16 Ibid., 7.
17 The verb *satara* is equivalent to the verb *ghafara* mentioned above; both designate covering.
18 This is a *ḥadīth* which appears in al-Bukhārī, *Jihād* 122 (7013): "I was sent with the all-comprehensive words." *Futūḥāt*, Vol. III, p. 160. SPK, pp. 239, 306, 330, 396, n. 17. Here Ibn al-ʿArabī finds corroboration for his idea that in his personality Muḥammad joins the external and the internal aspects.
19 This means that the internal aspect (night) exists in the external aspect (day) and vice versa.
20 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī plays with the stems *m.w.l* of *amwāl* and *m.y.l* of *yamīlu*, although the meanings of both words are different.
21 The author means the combination of the two aspects mentioned above.
22 This epithet does not necessarily indicate Muslims, but those who, like Muḥammad, manifest every divine and human trait. For example, they know the things as they really are, transcend every station and combine the two aspects of transcendence and immanence. In short, they are the ideal people. SPK, 376–379. SDG, p. XXV.

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the Qurʾān) "Give out of what He has made pass down to you" (Qurʾān 57:7, trans. AH) and concerning Noah (and his people) (the Qurʾān says): "Entrust yourselves to no one but Me" (Qurʾān 17:2, trans. AH). (The Qurʾān) affirms that the property is theirs and that God is their trustee. They are appointees of the property possessed by God, and God is their trustee. The property is in their grasp, but this is the property of appointment (*mulk al-istikhlāf*). Through this, the Real is the Owner of the Property (*mālik al-mulk*), as al-Tirmidhī said. "And they have deceived a mighty deception" (Qurʾān 71:22), because the call to God means a deception (of the people) to whom (this call) was directed, for God (72) has not been absent from the beginning, therefore He is always called to. "I call (the people) to God" (Qurʾān 12:108), and this is the essence of deception.[23] "(When I called them) it was out of clear awareness" (ibid.) He (Noah) turned their attention to (the idea) that the whole cosmos belongs to Him. They responded by deceiving him, just as he did.

The Muḥammadan knows that the call to God is not a call to His ipseity, but rather to His names. God said: "On the day that We shall gather the god-fearing to (*ilā*) the Merciful as a group" (Qurʾān 19:85). The Qurʾān uses the particle indicating direction (*ilā*) and connects it to God's name (the Merciful), hence it lets us know that the cosmos is under the providence of a divine name which obliges humans to be god-fearing. In their deceit they said: "Do not abandon your gods, do not abandon Wadd, Suwāʿ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Nasr" (Qurʾān 71:23). If they renounced their gods, they would not know the Real in the measure of their renouncement, for the Real is reflected in every worshiped god, whether one knows or does not know (this fact).

Concerning the Muḥammadans (Qurʾān 17:23 says): "God decreed (*qaḍā*) that you should worship none but Him," meaning He ordered (*ḥakama*).[24] The knower is aware of the object of worship and the form through which it was made manifest for the purpose of being worshiped. He also knows that separation and multiplicity (of the parts of this object) are like parts in the sensible form and like spiritual faculties in the spiritual form, hence in every object of worship it is God who is worshiped.[25] The inferior person is he who imagines (the existence of) divinity in these objects. If he had not imagined this, he would not have worshiped stone or other things. For this reason, God said (to Muḥammad): "Say (to the idolaters) 'name them' (the idols)" (Qurʾān 13:33). If they had named them, they would have named them stones, trees and stars. If they had been asked: "Whom did you worship?" They would have said: "A god." They would not have said God (*allāh*) or the god. The superior person does not imagine, but says that this is a divine manifestation which one needs to exalt, and he does not confine himself (to the worship of a specific object). The inferior person who uses his imagination says: "We only worship them

23 Noah's call was a deception, because he called them to believe in the transcendent God while omitting God's immanent aspect.

24 Believing in the human being's free will, Ibn al-ʿArabī cannot ascribe to God predetermination, which denies giving reward or punishment.

25 Since all things in the cosmos are God's manifestations, whether they are parts or wholes, when one worships a part of an object or a whole, one actually worships God.

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because they bring us nearer to God" (Qurʾān 39:3, trans. AH). The superior person, the knower, says: "Your God is one, so submit yourselves only to Him" wherever He is manifest "and give good news to the humble" (*al-mukhbitīn*, literally: those who make themselves low. Qurʾān 22:34), whose fire of nature was extinguished and they say "a god" and not "a nature."

"They have led many astray" (Qurʾān 71:24, trans. AH), meaning they have confused them regarding the counting of the One through aspects and attributions. "Do not increase the going astray of those who do evil" (*al-ẓālimīn*)[26] (ibid.) (73) to their souls. "The elect" (Qurʾān 38:47) "who inherited the Scripture" (Qurʾān 42:14) are the first of the three (groups).[27] He gives this group precedence over the moderate and the foremost. (By those who go astray mentioned above) he means the perplexity of the Muḥammadan (who says:) Increase my perplexity regarding You![28] "Whenever it (the lightning) flashes on them, they walk on, and when darkness falls around, them they stand still" (Qurʾān 2:20, trans. AH).

The perplexed person circles (the Pole) and his circular motion (continues) around the Pole without interruption,[29] while the individual who takes the long course inclines away from (the circle), distancing himself from the target, seeking only the state in which he exists and imagining his aim. (He imagines) the points of beginning and end of his way and that which is in between.[30] There is no beginning point for the human being who takes the circular course; he should not go out at a certain place nor direct himself to a final point. He possesses the complete existence and is given all the comprehensive words[31] and wisdoms (*ḥikam*).

"Because of their steps of going beyond"[32] (*khaṭīʾātihim*, literally: their sins, Qurʾān 71:25), which caused them to go beyond, they were drowned in the seas

26 This appellation is positive, for by it Ibn al-ʿArabī is referring to those who wrong their appetite souls and practice asceticism, thus reaching the highest rank of Sufism. Hence, such people are preferred to the moderate and the foremost. Affifi, I I, p. 40.

27 Ibn al-ʿArabī alludes to Qurʾān 35:32: "We gave the Scripture as a heritage to Our chosen servants: some of them wronged themselves (AH: their own souls), some stayed between (right and wrong), and some, by God's permission (AH: leave), were foremost in good deeds. That is the greatest favor" (based on AH's trans.).

28 This sentence is a paraphrase of Qurʾān 20:114 which reads: "Increase my knowledge" (*zidnī ʿilman*). Our author is saying that the measure of perplexity concerning God depends on the measure of our knowledge of Him. Perplexity is defined as drowning in the sea of knowledge, which is the final aim of the mystic. Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, pp. 358–363. See below, pp. 199–200 of the Arabic text.

29 The picture Ibn al-ʿArabī draws here is a circle, which corresponds to the whole of existence. At the center of the circle is the Pole or the Reality of Muḥammad, which represents the aggregation of all the phenomena of the cosmos. The perplexed person sees the Pole from every point of the circumference of the circle.

30 The second person seems to regard the world of phenomena as finite, hence his course is from the beginning to the ending point, while the knower, the perplexed, is aware of the infinite character of the world.

31 See note 18 above.

32 Here the author plays with the root of *khaṭīʾātihim*, *kh.ṭ.ʾ*, and replaces it with the root *kh.ṭ.w* in the first form (*khaṭā*), meaning to walk, to go.

of the knowledge of God, which means perplexity. "And they were made to enter a Fire" (ibid.), meaning according to the Muḥammadans the same as drowning. "When the seas boil over" (*sujjirat*, Qu'ān 81:6). When you set an oven on fire (you say): "The oven was set on fire (*sajjarat*)."

"Except for God, they found none to help them" (Qur'ān 71:25), for God was their (only) source of help,[33] and they were annihilated in Him forever. If He had taken them (from the bottom of the sea of knowledge) to the shore of nature (the world of the phenomena), He would have brought them down from this lofty rank, even if the whole cosmos belongs to God (*li-allāh*), (exists) through God (*bi-allāh*), and moreover the whole is God (*al-kull huwa allāh*).[34]

"(And) Noah said: 'My Lord'" (*rabbī* – ibid., 26). He did not say "My God" (*ilāhī*), for Lord has (the attribute of) stability, while God has (the attribute of) many names, because "Every day He does something (different)" (Qur'ān 55:29). By Lord, Noah means the stability in variation (*thubūt al-talwīn*),[35] for the only real existence belongs to Him. (Noah said to God): "Do not leave one of the unbelievers on earth" (Qur'ān 71:26), meaning that he calls (on God) to make them dwell in its bottom.[36] The Muḥammadan says: "If you drop a rope, it will fall upon God"[37] (which means that) "Everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to Him" (Qur'ān 2:116, trans. AH). When you are buried in it, you are in it and it is your place (*ẓarfuka*). ("From the earth we created you), into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time" (Qur'ān 20:55, trans. AH), because of the variety of aspects (involved in returning and raising). ("Do not leave) one of those who conceal[38] (*kāfirīn*) (on earth)" (Qur'ān 71:26) who "covered their heads with their garments and thrust their fingers into their ears"[39] in order to find cover, because he called (74) them to cover (*ghafara*) them, for covering (*ghafr*) means concealing (*satr*).

(He points out in this verse) "one" (Qur'ān 71:26) to indicate that just as the calling is general so is the benefit.

"If you leave them" (Qur'ān 71:27), meaning if you call them and leave them, "they will lead Your servants astray" (ibid.), meaning they will confound (*yuḥayyirūhum*) them and make them go out from servanthood to the mysteries of Lordship existing in them. Consequently, they will regard themselves as lords after they regarded themselves as servants; hence, they are servants and lords (at the same time). "They will not beget" (ibid.), meaning they will not

33 The text has "helpers" (*anṣār*).
34 If the whole is God, there is no higher or lower place or idea.
35 This phrase means that there are various stable names of God, whereas the name God (*allāh*) denotes the endless changes of all things in the cosmos. Each name is actually a lord (*rabb*). Affifi, I I, p. 42.
36 To be on earth means to consider only the external phenomena, while to be in the bottom of the earth means to see the inner aspects of existence.
37 Tirmidhī, V:58 (3298).
38 They are those who conceal the Real by worshiping idols.
39 Our author changed the order of Qur'ān 71:7.

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produce and manifest except "only one who breaks"[40] (ibid.), meaning one who manifests that which was concealed, (and only) "one who conceals,"[41] meaning concealed that which was manifest after its being manifested. They will manifest what was concealed, then conceal what was manifested after its manifestation. As a result, the beholder will be bewildered and not know the aim of the one who manifests in his manifestation, or the aim of the one who conceals in his concealment, nor that person (carrying out the two actions), who is one and the same. "My Lord, (*ighfir*) me" (Qurʾān 71:28), meaning conceal me and do it for my sake, so that (one) will not know my (true) value (*qadr*) and station, just as one does not know Your value in Your Qurʾanic statement "They did not assess God's true value" (6:91). (And conceal) "My parents" (Qurʾān 71:28), (that is) the intellect and the nature who produced me, "and whoever enters my house" (ibid.), meaning my heart, "believing" (ibid.), (that is) saying that the divine messages in it are true and that they derive from themselves (souls). (And conceal) "the male believers" from the intellect "and the female believers" from the souls. "And do not increase those who are obscure (*ẓālimīn*)" (ibid.). (This meaning) derives from the word "darkness" (*ẓulumāt*). They are the people of the hidden world who are concealed behind dark veils.[42] (Do not increase them) "But destruction (*tabār*)," (ibid.), meaning annihilation (in God) so that they will not be aware of their souls because they will see the face of the Real. (The following verse was directed) to the Muḥammadans: "Everything perishes except for His face" (Qurʾān 28:88). *Tabār* means annihilation. Whoever wishes to know the mysteries of Noah must ascend to the sphere of Noah (the sun). This issue is treated in my *al-tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*[43] (The Mosul Revelations). God speaks the Truth.

40 This is the first meaning of *fajara*, from which the active participle (*fājir*, wrong doer) derives.

41 Again, Ibn al-ʿArabī exploits the first meaning of *kafara* (he concealed), neglecting the usual meaning of *kaffār* (unbeliever).

42 p. 23.

43 *Majmūʿat rasāʾil ibn ʿarabī*, Beirut 2000, Vol. II.

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4 The bezel of the wisdom of holiness[1] exists in the essence of Enoch[2]

(75) (The term) elevation (*ʿuluww*) has two meanings: elevation with respect to physical place and elevation with respect to status. The elevation of place (is attested in Qurʾān 19:57), "We raised him to a high place." The highest place is the place around which the Spheres revolve. This is the Sphere of the Sun, the place of the spirituality of Enoch. Seven Spheres are situated below the Sphere of Enoch and seven others above it, and his Sphere is the fifteenth. The Spheres above him are those of Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Mansions, the Constellations (*al-aṭlas*),[3] the Footstool, and the Throne. The Spheres below him are those of Venus, Mercury, the Moon, Ether, Air, Water, Earth. Because (the Sphere of the Sun) is the pivot of (all) the Spheres, it is an elevated place.[4]

As for the elevated status, it belongs to us, the Muḥammadans. God said: "You are the elevated, and God is with you" (Qurʾān 47:35) in this elevation; He is far above physical place but not above status.[5] When the souls of those of us who acted were afraid (of God's proximity to the human being), He said (following "God is with you"): "God will not decrease the reward for your actions" (ibid.). That is because an action requires place, while knowledge requires status. Hence, God conjoins the two elevations, the elevation of place through action and of status through knowledge. Then, in order to place Himself far above the human being, He said: "Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High" (Qurʾān 87:1) to negate any idea of partnership.[6]

1 Like *Ḥikma subūḥiyya* (ch. 3), *Ḥikma qudūsiyya* designates God's transcendence. However, whereas the first phrase denotes God's transcendence which is expressed in lacking of a copartner and not suffering damage, the second phrase means God's detachment from all kinds of possible things. Affifi, II, p. 46.

2 For Idrīs, see Qurʾān 19:56–57, 21:85, 86. G. Vajda, "Idrīs," E I2. As in other chapters, in this chapter Idrīs is not a historical person, but a spirit which resides in the sphere of the sun. Affifi, II, p. 45. See below, ch. 22.

3 The Sphere of *burūj*, which is placed after *al-aṭlas*, is identical to the Sphere of *al-aṭlas* and hence redundant.

4 As is well known, this is not the usual description of the Spheres by the philosophers or the astronomers, but a strange amalgamation of astronomical, philosophical and Qurʾānic elements. Affifi, II, 48.

5 Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to say that since the human being reflects God, he shares with Him the attribute of elevation.

6 In keeping with his doctrine of conjoining of contraries, our author says that God is both with the humans and is not with them, just as He is both the external and the internal, the first and the last, and so on.

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Among the most wonderful things is that the human being, I mean the perfect human being, is the most elevated existent. Elevation is attached to him only through his relationship to a place, or to a grade, that is, status. His elevation does not derive from his essence (*li-dhātihi*). He is elevated because of the elevation of place and grade. Elevation derives from both (place and grade). For example, the elevation of place (76) (is attested in Qurʾān 20:5), "The Merciful sat Himself upon the Throne," which is the highest place. (Concerning) the elevation of status (God said): "Everything perishes except for His face" (Qurʾān 28:88) and "All things return to Him" (Qurʾān 11:123) (and) "Is there a god with God?" (Qurʾān 27:60). When God said: "We raised him to an elevated (*ʿaliyyan*) place" (Qurʾān 19:57), He made *ʿaliyyan* an adjective of a place. (And when He said): "When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am appointing a vicegerent on earth'" (Qurʾān 2:30), He meant the elevation of status. And He said regarding the angels: "Are you (the Devil) proud or are you among the elevated?" (Qurʾān 38:75), thus He ascribed elevation to the angels. If elevation were ascribed to them because of their being angels, then all angels would be elevated. Since God does not generalize, although all the angels share the definition of angels, we know that, according to God, this is an elevation of status. Likewise, if the elevation of the vicegerents (Caliphs) among people were an essential attribute, every human being would share this (attribute). However, since He does not generalize, we know that this elevation derives from status.

The Elevated (*al-ʿaliyy*) is one of His Most Beautiful Names. (However), elevated above whom, when only He exists? Thus, He is the Elevated by virtue of His Essence.[7] From where did He take (this elevation),[8] when only He exists? Thus, again, His elevation is by virtue of His Essence. With respect to existence, He is the Essence of the existents. What we call contingent beings (*muḥdathāt*)[9] are elevated by virtue of themselves, because they are (actually) His (manifestation), for He is not elevated in a relative (but in an essential) way. That is because the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), which never exist in a concrete form or (even) smell the odor of existence, remain in their state (of absence) despite the multiplicity of the existent forms.[10] There exists One Essence from which all the concrete things can be gathered and which permeates them all. The existence of multiplicity (of things) derives from God's names, which are solely nonexistent relationships (and not concrete entities).[11] There is only the *ʿayn*, which is the Essence (of God). He is the Elevated by virtue of His Essence (*li-nafsihi*),[12] not by virtue of any relationship. From this

7 Unlike the human being, whose essence does not elevate him.
8 *Sharḥ*, p. 77.
9 These are things that are brought into being in time.
10 The fixed entities are manifestations of God, and the concrete existents are in turn manifestations of the fixed entities, hence the concrete existents are elevated by virtue of themselves.
11 Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts the Muʿtazilite doctrine that God's attributes are not entities existing in God's essence. M. Takeshita, "An Analysis of Ibn ʿArabī's *Inshāʾ al-Dawāʾir* with Particular Reference to the Doctrine of the Third Entity," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41, 4 (1982), p. 249.
12 To express the notion of essence, Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the words *ʿayn*, *dhāt* and *nafs*. One should emphasize that for our author the Essence is devoid of any characteristic and hence ineffable. However, he is not consistent in this assertion, for in *Futūḥāt*, Vol. VI I,

point of view, there is no relative elevation in this world; however, the aspects of existence have different grades. Relative elevation exists in the Unique Essence when it is considered (manifesting) many aspects. For this reason, we say regarding Him that He is not He and you are not you.[13]

Al-Kharrāz[14] (77), who is one of the Real's aspects and one of His tongues, refers to God's Self saying that God can be known only through His combination of opposites which determine His (nature).[15] "He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden" (Qurʾān 57:3). He is the Essence (*ʿayn*) of the manifest things and the Essence of the hidden things when they are manifest.[16] Only He sees Himself, and nothing is hidden from Him. He is both Manifest and Hidden by virtue of[17] His Essence (*li-nafsihi*). He, Abū Saʿīd al-Kharrāz, and other created beings are called in this manner (of combination of the manifest and the hidden).

The hidden says "no" when the manifest says "I am (the manifest)," and when the hidden says "I (am the hidden)," the manifest says "no." (This situation) refers to each opposite (which negates the other), while the speaker and the listener are one and the same. The Prophet says: "What they told themselves,"[18] (meaning) they are the tellers, the listeners and those who know what was told. The essence is one, while the aspects are many. There is no way to escape this knowledge, for every person knows this of himself, and this is the form of the Real.[19]

(Without counting) things are not in order. (Hence) numbers appear through (adding) "one" (*wāḥid*) to each number in a known arrangement. The "one" brings the number into existence, and the "one" divides the number.[20] The number appears only through that which is countable (*maʿdūd*).[21] The countable can be either absent or existent: a thing may be absent with respect to the senses, but existent with respect to the intellect. In sum, there must be a number and that which is countable, just as there must be "one" which creates the number and the number is increased by it. Each grade of number is a single reality, such as nine or ten, down

p. 13 (the beginning of ch. 406), he says that contrary to the attributes All-Mighty, the Creator, etc., the attributes of "being in no need and glory belongs to the Essence" (*al-ghinā wa'l-ʿizza li'l-dhāt*).

13 God as considered in terms of Essence is not God as considered in terms of attributes.

14 Died 899. On Al-Kharrāz as seen by Ibn al-ʿArabī, see my *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 63–67.

15 One may judge God's activity only through being aware of His being the conjoining of opposites. Cf. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt*, *Rasāʿil*, I I, p. 40.

16 That is because God's existence pervades all existents, both the manifest and the hidden; in other words, there is no difference in His relationship to the existents.

17 Ibn al-ʿArabī here uses two particles *li* and *ʿan* to denote "by virtue of."

18 Or "what their souls told." Bukhārī, I I:15.

19 Just as God is one entity, but has many attributes, so the human being shares this principle.

20 Read *wa-faṣṣala al-wāḥid al-ʿadad*. He means to say that the number is the combination of many ones.

21 Read *bi'l-maʿdūd*, in keeping with *Sharḥ*, p. 80, meaning that not all things are countable.

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to the lowest number and up to the highest infinitely. These numbers are not a sum (of particulars), but rather they are called a collection of ones (*jamʿ al-āḥād*).[22]

(78) That is because the number two and the number three are unique realities, and so on, even if they (the numbers that follow) are combined from ones. However, the essences (of each number) differ from each other. The combination (of ones) characterizes all numbers; the combination speaks of them (ones) and through them determines[23] (their place). In this speech (of the combination) there are twenty grades[24] which are combined from ones. You can continue to affirm the reality of the number which you negate, because of its essence.[25]

Whoever knows that which we have established regarding the numbers, namely, that their negation is their very affirmation, knows that the transcendent Real is the same as the immanent created thing, even though the created differs from the Creator. The statements that the Creator is like the created and the created is like the Creator refer to One Essence (*ʿayn wāḥida*).[26] All this derives from One Essence. Furthermore, it is (simultaneously) One Essence and many essences. ("When the boy was old enough to work with his father, Ibrāhīm said: 'My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream.) What do you think?' He said: 'Father, do as you are commanded . . . '" (Qurʾān 37:102 trans. AH). And the son is identical to his father. Thus, he (Ibrāhīm) saw that he would sacrifice only himself. He ransomed him "with a mighty sacrifice" (ibid.: 107),[27] so that what had appeared in a human form appeared as a ram. (Furthermore), he who was the essence of a father appeared in the form of a boy, nay, as a real boy.[28]

"He created from Ādam his mate" (Qurʾān 4:1), so (Ādam) married only himself. Hence, from Ādam (came forth) his mate and child, (however, although they are three) in number, they are one in essence.

What is nature and what emerges from it? We observe that nature does not diminish, because of that which comes forth from it, nor increase because of that which does not come forth. Nature is only that which appears from it, (however) nature does not constitute the essence of the manifest things, for many forms characterize it. (For example), there exists a thing which is cold and dry and another hot and dry. Their common denominator is dryness, but they are different regarding temperature. What joins them is nature, nay, it is the natural essence. Thus, the world of nature can be seen as many forms in one mirror, nay, a single form in many mirrors.[29]

22 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī reiterates the notion that an entity is one from one point of view and many from another. Thus, opposites exist in one and the same entity.
23 Read *yaqūlu* and *yaḥkumu*, respectively. *Sharḥ*, pp. 80f.
24 They are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, and 1000.
25 The essence of a number is its being composed of ones.
26 This phrase can also be rendered "One Entity." SDG, p. 72.
27 The Qurʾān reads: "We ransomed him" (*fadaynāhu*).
28 Ibn al-ʿArabī speaks of three forms of one entity.
29 Again, all depends on the observer's point of view. From one point of view, nature serves as a mirror of all things, meaning that all things are reflected in nature, or nature embraces all things; but from another point of view, nature pervades all things, meaning it is an essential element of all things or it is reflected in everything.

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(This can bring about) perplexity because of the differences in perspective. However, whoever knows what we have said does not become perplexed. If (79) his knowledge increases, it is only through the aspect of the substrate (*ḥukm al-maḥall*), because the substrate is the basis of the fixed entity.[30] In the substrates, God's manifestations and all their aspects are diversified, and the substrate can receive every aspect. One can judge God's manifestation only through the substrate in which He is manifested. And this is the only (explanation of the structure of the world).

> The Real from one aspect is creation, so think about (it)/but from another aspect He is not, so take (it) into consideration;
>
> Whoever knows what I have said, his insight will not leave (him)/and only whoever perceives knows this;
>
> The essence, whether combination or separation is one/yet (either way) it is multiplicity, not remaining or leaving.

The Elevated by virtue of Himself is He who possesses perfection through which He encompasses all the existents and nonexistent relationships in such a way that no trait of them escapes Him, whether (these) traits are praiseworthy or blameworthy from the point of view of custom, intellect or religion. This applies only to the name God (Allāh). As for other names (of the Divine), they are either God's manifestations (*majlan*)[31] or a form in a manifestation. If they are manifestations, there necessarily exists a priority among them,[32] and if it is a form in a manifestation, then this form is the essential perfection, because it is the essence of what is manifest in a certain entity.[33] That which pertains to the name Allāh pertains to this form.[34] We do not say that the names are He, nor are they other than He.[35]

In his book *Khalʿ* (*al-naʿlayn*), Abū al-Qāsim ibn Qasī[36] points to this (principle), saying that every divine name is designated by all the divine names and depicted by them. That is because every name indicates both the Essence and the unique aspect toward which it is directed, and this name seeks for this aspect.[37] From the point of view of its indication of the Essence, it possesses all the names, while from the point of view of its indication of its unique aspect,

30 *Al-maḥall* means the thing in which the fixed entity, such as an idea, is embodied. The diversity of God's manifestations is revealed through these substrates.
31 For this word, see Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, p. 268.
32 For example, God's mercy overcomes His anger.
33 Possibly by this form Ibn al-ʿArabī means the Perfect Human Being.
34 All God's names are included in the name Allāh, so this form (the Perfect Human Being) contains all God's names.
35 See ch. 2, n. 19.
36 Died 1151. A. Faure, "Ibn Qasī," EI2. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 145–150.
37 According to al-Ḥallāj, each of God's attributes includes all the other attributes. Takeshita, p. 20.

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it is distinguished from others, for example, the Lord, the Creator, the Former (*muṣawwir*), and so on. Thus, from the perspective of the Essence, the name and the named are identical, (8o) while from the perspective of the meaning to which the name is directed they are different.

If you understand that the Elevated is that which we have mentioned, you know that (His) elevation is neither of place nor of position. That is, because the elevation of position pertains only to leaders, such as sultans, governors, ministers, judges and every holder of office whether they are qualified for this office or not. Elevation by virtue of attributes is not like this, for the one who holds the office of a governor may have dominion over the most knowledgeable person, even if the former is the most ignorant person. The governor is elevated in position, because of his office, and not because of his own attributes. If the governor is dismissed from his office, his high standing will disappear, while the knowledgeable person does not lose his high standing.

5 The bezel of the wisdom of excessive love exists in the essence of Abraham

(80) Abraham is called *al-khalīl*[1] because he pervades and encompasses all the (attributes) through which the Divine Essence is described.[2] A poet said: "You (God) permeated (*takhalalta*) me just as the spirit permeated my body[3]/because of this permeation he (Abraham) was named *al-khalīl*."

It is just as the color permeates the colored; in such a way the accident (*ʿaraḍ*) pervades the substrate. It is not the relationship between a place and that which is placed on it.[4] Or Abraham was so called because the Real permeates his form. Every aspect (*ḥukm*) (of permeation) is valid, for every aspect has its place through which it is manifest and beyond which it is not manifest. Do you not understand that the Real is manifest through the attributes of the created things, (including) attributes of deficiency and blame, and He informs this about Himself? Do you not understand that the created being is manifest through the Real's attributes from first to last, all of which are appropriate to it, just as the attributes of the created things (81) are appropriate to the Real? (The words) "Praise belongs to God" (Qurʿān 1:1) (mean) that the effects of praise, whether they relate to the praiser or the one praised, go back to God. "And all things return to Him" (Qurʾān 11:123) (means) that He embraces (in Himself) the blameworthy and the praiseworthy and that there is no (other) alternative – only the blamed and the praised.[5]

Know that a thing permeates another only when it is immersed in the latter (*maḥmūl fīhi*).[6] That which permeates (another is called) the active participle (*ism al-fāʿil*) and it is veiled by that which is permeated, the passive participle (*ism*

1 This word means "the friend of God"; however, Ibn al-ʿArabī understands this name in a different way.
2 From this point of view Abraham is also the Perfect Human Being, in that all the divine attributes exist in him. Affifi, II, p. 57.
3 *Sharḥ*, p. 85.
4 In the last possibility we are speaking about two separate entities, the place and the thing which is put on it, but, contrary to the sample of color, the thing placed does not become a part of the place.
5 According to the Qurʾān's commentators, this verse conveys the idea that God knows all the human beings' acts and He will reward them or punish them in the Hereafter for their deeds. See, for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, Vol. III, p. 588.
6 In logic *maḥmūl* signifies the predicate. Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifāʾ*, index.

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al-mafʿūl).[7] The passive participle is manifest and the active participle is hidden and concealed. The latter is nourishment for the former, like water permeating a piece of wool and thus making it grow and expand. If the Real is the manifest, then the created (human being) is hidden in Him, and as a result the created (embraces) all the names of the Real, His hearing, seeing, all His relationships and perceptions. If the created is the manifest, the Real is concealed and hidden in him; the Real, then, is the hearing of the created, his seeing, hand, foot and all his faculties, as referred to in the correct tradition.[8]

Moreover, if these relationships were removed from the Essence, it would not be Divinity (*ilāh*).[9] Our (fixed) entities (*aʿyānunā*) bring into being these relationships; because God exists in us (*maʾlūhiyatunā*),[10] we make Him God. Consequently, He is not known till we know Him (as God). He (Muḥammad) said: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord."[11] And he (Muḥammad) best knows God. Some scholars, including Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ghazālī, d. 1111), claimed that God can be known without observing the cosmos, which is a fault.[12] Indeed, an eternal essence can be known; however, that this entity is god (*ilāh*)[13] can be known only after gaining knowledge of the objects dependent on this entity (*al-maʾlūh*). These objects are the indication (*dalīl*) of this entity.

Then, after that, in a second state, revelation grants you (the knowledge) that the Real Himself is the very indication of Himself and His Divinity, that the cosmos is nothing but His self-disclosure in the forms of the fixed entities (*aʿyān thābita*) whose existence is impossible without Him, and that He is manifest through various forms according to the realities of these entities and their states. This (is known) after we know (82) that He is our god. Then comes the final revelation through which our forms are disclosed in Him; some of us are disclosed to each other in the Real, and some of us know each other and are different from each other. Some of us know that God knows us through us, and some others do not know that in this Presence (*ḥaḍra* – God) there is knowledge (produced) by us. "I seek refuge in God, lest I be one of the ignorant" (Qurʾān 2:67). Only through these two revelations[14] does God determine (our states) through us, nay, rather we determine (our states) through us, yet in Him. For this reason God said: "God has the conclusive argument" (Qurʾān 6:149). (God means the conclusive argument) against the veiled, for

7 These two grammatical terms can also be rendered the "agent" and "object" of an act, respectively.
8 Bukhārī, LXXXI:38 (6502). See ch. 1, n. 81, above.
9 Here the Essence means God with respect to His names and attributes, and not God's pure Essence, which is ineffable.
10 Qayṣrī, p. 526.
11 Ch. 3, n. 4.
12 This strange note of the Greatest Master is to the best of my knowledge mistaken. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, Vol. IV, Book 9 (*Kitāb al-tafakkur*).
13 By god Ibn al-ʿArabī means an entity which has relationships with the cosmos that it created.
14 The first revelation conveys the idea that God is reflected in the cosmos, and the second that the cosmos is reflected in Him.

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they said to the Real: "Why have You done things to us which did not coincide with our aims?"[15] He made their affair difficult for them.[16] The gnostics disclosed this matter and knew that the Real has not done to them what they claimed He did, and that this grave thing derived from them, for He only taught them their own states, hence their argument was refuted and God's conclusive argument remained (valid).

If you ask what can we learn from His saying: "If He had willed, He would have guided all of you" (ibid.), we shall say: "In the phrase 'if He had willed' the word "if" indicates an impossibility because of another impossibility[17] (*imtināʿ li-imtināʿ*), for God only wills the thing as it really is.[18] According to reason, the possible thing in definition can receive a trait or its opposite;[19] however, what determines which trait of the two reasonable possible traits will exist depends on what was already established in the fixed entity. The meaning of "He would have guided you" is "He would have explained to you" (your hidden state). God does not open the insight of every possible individual to perceive things as they really are. Among people there are knowers and ignoramuses. God does not will and He will not will, hence He cannot guide them all. Likewise, (if we say) "if He wills," (we can ask) does He will that which cannot be? His will has a single connection, which constitutes a relationship to knowledge which in turn is connected to a known object, and the known object (83) is you and your states. Knowledge has no effect on the object of knowledge, but rather the object of knowledge affects knowledge and gives to knowledge from itself its true state.

The Divine Address comes only in accordance with the agreement of those addressed and with what rational observation conveys. It does not come in accordance with unveiling. For this reason, believers are many, and gnostics, the people of unveiling, are few. "There are none of us, but have a known place" (Qurʾān 37:164), meaning through the personality you have in your fixed entity you will appear in (concrete existence), on condition that your existence will be affirmed. If it is affirmed that existence belongs to the Real, not to you, then you are undoubtedly determined in the existence of the Real. If it is affirmed that you are existent, then you are undoubtedly determined as a real existent. If the Real determines (your existence), He should only pour existence upon you, and as a result, you determine yourself.[20] Hence, you should praise or blame only yourself. What remains for the

15 The text has "their aims," which does not fit the meaning of the sentence.

16 I follow here Austin's translation, although he regards this sentence as a Qurʾānic verse, but it is a paraphrase of Qurʾān 68:42 which reads: "On the Day when matters become dire." According to the translator Abdel Haleem, the sentence literally means when a shin is bared.

17 This is a hypothetical clause which indicates that there is no possibility of the existence of the conditioned instance.

18 If a human being is not to be guided according to his fixed entity and God knows this state, He cannot guide this human being. Thus, God is prevented from performing universal guidance because of His knowledge.

19 A tree, for example, can be existent or nonexistent.

20 The human personality and traits are determined by the fixed entities, the ideas which reside in God's thought. When God bestows on these entities existence, they become

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Real is only the praise of pouring forth existence, because this belongs to Him, not to you. You supply the Real (literally: feed Him) with determinations, while He supplies you with existence. What is allocated to Him is allocated to you. Thus, all things (literally: the affair, *al-amr*) derive from Him to you, and from you to Him. However, you are called obliged (*mukallaf*), and He obliges you only through your saying to Him "oblige me through your true state." Hence He is not obliged.[21]

He praises me and I praise Him/He worships me and I worship Him

In (my) state (of existence) I affirm Him/but regarding the (fixed) entities I deny Him

He knows me and I do not/and I know Him and witness Him

How can He be independent while/I help Him and make Him happy[22]

For this reason, the Real created me/for I make Him know and thus bring Him into existence[23]

A tradition[24] tells us this/and in me His aim is realized

(84) Since al-Khalīl attained this grade, because of which he was called al-Khalīl, he established hospitality as a rule, and Ibn Masarra[25] put him with Mīkāʾīl (as sponsors) of the means of subsistence. By the means of subsistence people are fed. When the means of subsistence permeate the one who is fed in such a way that every part of the fed person is permeated, food spreads in all the parts of the fed person. (However, regarding God) there are no parts (in Him), hence He necessarily permeates all the Divine Stations which are called names, so that His Essence is manifest through them.

We belong to Him as signs in us/show this, but we (also) belong to ourselves

He has only my being (to manifest Himself)/for we belong to Him just as we belong to ourselves

I have two aspects, He and I/but He has no "I" through me[26]

In me He is manifest/and we are for Him as vessels

"God speaks the truth and guides to the right path" (Qurʾān 33:4).

existents in the concrete world. Thus, in the phase of giving existence, the structure of the human being was already determined and cannot change. It is as if the human being determines his own structure, while actually God determines it in His thought.

21 The human being is obliged through the hidden principles imprinted in his fixed entity. Here arises a theological problem of God's being obliged to act according to a previous plan. Although Ibn al-ʿArabī states that God is not obliged, He is obliged by His own determinations.

22 God sees His attributes only in creation, thus He is dependent on the cosmos.

23 God receives knowledge from the human being who reflects His attributes, and so in this respect the human bestows existence on God.

24 According to al-Kāshānī (p. 199), the tradition is: "They have represented me (as a figure standing) before their eyes" (*qad maththalūnī bayna aʿyunihim*). Trans. by Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, p. 13, n. 1.

25 On Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Masarra al-Jabalī, see my *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 97–102.

26 The human being has two aspects: first, his existence through God and his being a reflection of God, and second, his being himself with respect to other human beings. Dagli, p. 65, n. 34.

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6 The bezel of the wisdom of reality[1] exists in the essence of Isaac

The ransom of a prophet is the slaughter of an animal for sacrifice/What is the cry of man in comparison to the voice of a ram?

God the Mighty made the animal mighty[2] taking care/of us or of it – I do not know by what standard[3]

No doubt (other) sacrificial animals are highly valuable/but they are less valuable than the sacrifice of a ram

I wish I knew how a single small ram replaced/the vicegerent of the Merciful

Do you not know that all things[4] were arranged/in fulfillment of profit and in decreasing loss?

(85) There is no creation higher than the inanimate[5] and after it/the plant, in certain measures and patterns

And after the plant come the possessors of senses and all know/their creator through unveiling or rational demonstration

As for the one called Ādam he is/restricted by intellect, thinking and the necklace of faith (*īmān*)

Sahl,[6] who was a verifier like us, said the same thing (about Ādam)/for we and they have reached the level of witnessing (*iḥsān*)[7]

Whoever witnesses that which I have witnessed/will say the same I have said both secretly and openly

1 Wisdom of Reality (*ḥikma ḥakkiyya)* represents Isaac's request from his father to transform the latter's dream into reality.
2 Qur'ān 37:107.
3 The author does not know by which standard God decides to change the sacrificial victim, and as a result, he does not know the object of God's care.
4 Ibn al-ʿArabī is going to explain the order of all things in nature.
5 The principle Ibn al-ʿArabī uses here is that the lower the thing is in the domain of concrete existence, the higher it is in the domain of servanthood. Hence, the inanimate thing is the highest entity regarding servanthood.
6 Sahl al-Tustarī, died 896. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 53–62.
7 Very probably Ibn al-ʿArabī regards *iḥsān* as higher than *īmān*, according to Qur'ān 5:93. Al-Kāshānī, p. 208. Since the definition of *iḥsān* is "worship God as if you see Him" (*Fuṣūs*, p. 123; SPK, p. 401, n. 24), the commentators of the *Fuṣūs* extended this meaning to include witnessing. Al-Kāshānī, p. 208.

Do not pay attention to a view contrary to our view/or sow seeds in blind soil[8]

They are the deaf and the dumb[9] whom/the infallible (Muḥāmmad) brought to our notice in the text of the Qurʾān

Know, may God bestow on us and on you revelation, that Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl said to his son: "My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream" (Qurʾān 37:102). The dream is on the plane of imagination, and so he did not interpret the dream. A ram in the form of Abraham's son appeared in the dream, and Abraham believed that what he saw in the dream was true. His Lord ransomed Abraham's son from the false imagination of his father by the great sacrifice,[10] which means the interpretation of his dream in the eyes of God, while he (Abraham) was unaware.

The disclosure of a form on the plane of imagination requires another science (*ʿilm*)[11] through which one can perceive what God means by this form. Do you not consider what God's Messenger said to Abū Bakr on his interpretation of a dream: "You were right in part but also partly wrong"?[12] Abū Bakr asked Muḥammad to tell him where he was right and where he was wrong, but the Prophet did not answer. God said to Abraham when He called him: "O Abraham, you believed that the dream is true" (ibid. 105). He did not say to him you believed that he is your son in the dream, because Abraham did not interpret the dream, but accepted the manifest form of what he saw.[13] However, dreams (86) require interpretation. For this reason, the King of Egypt (*al-ʿazīz*: literally: the Powerful) said (addressing his courtiers): "If you can interpret (*taʿburūn*) the dream" (Qurʾān 12:43). The meaning of interpretation (*taʿbīr*) is to pass from the form one sees to something else. The cows were (symbols) of years of barrenness and plenty.

If Abraham had been right in understanding his dream, he would have slaughtered his son. However, he truly saw his son (in the dream), whereas in God's eyes it was the Great Sacrifice in the form of his son. God ransomed him because of Abraham's thought; in God's eyes it was not a real ransom (the ransom was the ram). His sense perception produced the sacrifice, while his imagination produced his son. If he had seen the ram in his imagination, he would have interpreted it as his son or something else. Then God said: "Indeed, this is a clear test" (Qurʾān 37:106), that is, a clear and manifest trial of knowledge: would he know what the interpretation of the dream required or not? He knew that imagination required interpretation. However, he did not take into consideration what this realm of dreams implied. For this reason, he regarded the dream as true, just as did Taqī ibn Mukhallad,[14] the imam and the author of a Musnad. He heard in a tradition which he approved that the Prophet said:

8 Do not teach those who have not the disposition of learning. Kāshānī, p. 208.
9 Qurʾān 8:22–23.
10 Qurʾān 37:107.
11 This is the science of interpretation of dreams (*taʿbīr al-ruʾyā*).
12 For the dream, see Kāshānī, pp. 209f.
13 Abraham saw in the dream that he would sacrifice his son. However, he should have interpreted this vision to know the truth, but he did not do so. Therefore, he understood he had to sacrifice his son.
14 An Andalusian traditionist (d. 276/889).

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"Whoever sees me in sleep has seen me in waking, for the Devil cannot assimilate my form."[15] In this dream Taqī ibn Mukhallad saw the Prophet, who gave him milk to drink. Taqī ibn Mukhallad regarded the dream as true; he drank and then vomited the milk. Had he interpreted the dream, this milk would have been knowledge. God deprived him much knowledge according to the measure of his drinking. Do you not see that (when) the Messenger of God was given a cup of milk in a dream he said: "I drank the milk until I was completely satiated (literally: until satiety came out of my fingernails), and then gave the remainder to ʿUmar"?[16] The Prophet was asked: "What is your interpretation, O God's Messenger?" He said: "Knowledge." He did not leave it as milk, (that is) in the (87) form of what he saw, because he knew it was a dream that required interpretation.

It is well known that the form of the Prophet, which was seen by the sense (of sight), is buried in al-Madīna, and that the form of his spirit and his rational soul (*laṭīfa*)[17] has not been seen by anyone through (the form) of anyone else or through (the form) of oneself. Each spirit must be regarded as such. The spirit of the Prophet appears to one in a dream in the form of his body when he died, without the body being damaged at all. It is Muḥammad who is seen through his spirit in a bodily form which resembles his buried form. The Devil cannot assume the form of Muḥammad's body, for God protects the one who sees him. For this reason, whoever sees Muḥammad in this form will learn from him all that he orders or prohibits, or tells him, just as he could learn from the Prophet in this world the laws in keeping with the sayings which point to these laws, namely, (laws written) in texts, through plain or general meanings or through whatever form. If he (the Prophet) gives him something, this thing may be interpreted. If, (however), knowledge through the senses equals knowledge through the imagination, this dream does not need interpretation.[18] Through and on the basis of this criterion Abraham and Taqī ibn Mukhallad dealt with their dreams.

Since the dream has two aspects,[19] and since God has taught us what He did regarding Abraham and what He said to him – because this is the manner befitting the grade of prophecy – we know (the following): In our vision of the Real in a form which the rational argument rejects, we should interpret this form in a way appropriate to religion, (that is), in terms of who the seer is, or the place where the Real was seen, or both. If rational argument does not reject (the form we saw), we shall leave this form as it was seen, in the same form as we shall see the Real in the world to come.[20]

15 Muslim, XLII:12 (2266).
16 Ibn Ḥanbal, II:83, 154.
17 Al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, pp. 202, 289.
18 According to this criterion, Abraham's conduct is right, because the form he saw in his dream, that is, in his imagination, was Isaac, and his perception of Isaac in his dream matches his perception of him through the sense of sight in the concrete existence, therefore he did not interpret his dream.
19 That is, the sensual and the imaginal perceptions.
20 This system of interpreting Qurʾānic verses whose literal meaning cannot be accepted by reason is reminiscent of al-Ashʿarī's way to deal with such verses. Al-Ashʿarī, *Al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*, Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Munīriyya, Cairo n.d., p. 13 (the chapter on the seeing of God).

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(88) The One, the Merciful, has in every domain[21]/hidden and manifest forms

If you say this is the Real, you are right/and if you say something else you are interpreting

His status is not determined in one domain to exclude another/but He unveils Himself to creation through His Reality

When He discloses Himself to the sight, the intellect/refutes (His appearance) through a persistent proof

He is accepted in the domain of the intellect/in imagination, and in true sight

Abū Yazīd said concerning this station: If the Throne and that which it contains – multiplied a hundred millions times – were (to dwell) in one of the corners of the gnostic's heart, he would not feel them.[22] This is the ability of Abū Yazīd in the world of bodies. Moreover, I say that if the infinite existence was assessed as finite with the Essence which brought it into existence (and these found their abode) in one of the corners of the gnostic's heart, he would not perceive them in his knowledge. Hence, it is proved that the heart contains the Real, and notwithstanding, it is not shown as satiated. If it were filled, said Abū Yazīd, it would be satiated. We note this station, saying:

O He who creates things in Himself/You encompass what you create

You create the infinite being within You/even as You are the Limited and the Vast

If the creation of God were in my heart/its luminous dawn would not appear (there)

Whoever comprises the Real, cannot be confined/to (comprise) creation; What is your opinion O Listener

Through the power of fancy every human being creates in his faculty of imagination that which has existence only in this faculty.[23] This is the general matter. The gnostic creates through spiritual aspiration (*himma*)[24] that which has existence outside the substrate of his spiritual aspiration; however, this aspiration does not cease to preserve its object. Its preservation, that is, the preservation of that which it created, does not weary this faculty.[25] When the gnostic does not pay attention (89) to the preservation of this created entity, it disappears, unless the gnostic masters all his domains[26] (*ḥaḍarāt*) and does not become heedless at all, because he witnesses at least one domain. When the gnostic through his spiritual aspiration creates, possessing this mastership, that which he created, this creation

21 Ibn al-ʿArabī uses this word (*mawṭin*) to denote "domain." Thus, there exists the domain of reason, the domain of imagination, the domain of this world, etc. I prefer to translate *mawṭin* as "domain" (in SDG, p. 46, it is homestead), because it has the double meaning of spiritual and physical spheres.

22 Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 46f.

23 This sentence is awkward in Arabic. Using two terms (*wahm* and *khayāl*), Ibn al-ʿArabī repeats the power of imagination twice without any need. He seems to say that the human being creates in his imagination, or using it, forms which are appropriate only to this faculty.

24 See above, p. 14, n. 4.

25 Qurʾān 2:255.

26 Possibly the author means domains or presences such as the senses, the intellect and so on. Kāshānī, p. 216. *Sharḥ*, p. 102. *Ḥaḍra* is a divine or cosmological reality, hence also God's names and their ramifications are realities. *Muʿjam*, pp. 323–327.

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appears in his form in every domain; the forms become preserved by each other. As a result, when the gnostic does not pay attention to a certain domain, or to some domains, while witnessing one of the domains and preserving in it the form of his creation, all the forms are preserved through his preservation of this single form in the domain which he heeds. That is because heedlessness is never absolute, neither regarding all the domains, nor regarding a single domain.

Here I have revealed a mystery which the people of God have always jealously concealed, because this mystery refutes their claim that they are the Real. However, the Real is always attentive, while the servant does not escape inattentiveness to something. From the point of view of preserving what he created, the gnostic may say: "I am the Real" (*anā al-ḥaqq*).[27] However, his preservation of his creation is not like God's, and we have already clarified the difference. The servant is different from the Real, given his heedlessness of a form and its domain. He must be distinct from the Real, notwithstanding his continuing preservation of all the forms through the preservation of one form in the domain to which he pays heed. This is preservation through a guaranty,[28] while God's preservation of what He created is not like this, for it is a preservation of each form specifically.

As I have been told, no one has written ever before on this question in a book, neither I nor others, except in this book, hence it (the question) is extraordinary and unique. Consequently, beware of being inattentive to this question, for the remaining domain, which still you dwell within, with the form, is like the Book in which God said: "We have left nothing out unwritten in the Book" (Qurʾān 6:38), for the Book comprises the past and future events. Only he who has the faculty of combination (*qurʾān*) (all the presences)[29] in his soul knows what we have said (90), for whoever fears God, "God will give him the faculty of separation" (*furqān* between the Real and the creation).[30] This is similar to what we have pointed out regarding this question of the device through which the servant is distinct from the Lord. This faculty of separation is the loftiest faculty of separation.

At one time the servant is a lord without a doubt/and at another he is really a servant without a lie

If he is a servant, he encompasses the Real/and if he is a lord, he is in a poor state

Through his being a servant, he beholds the essence of his self/and with no doubt hopes overflow from him

Through his being a lord, he beholds the whole of creation/making demands on him through the domain of Ownership and Kingdom

Because of his essence he cannot answer their demands/for this reason you see some gnostics weeping

So be a servant of a lord and not a lord of his servant/lest you fall, melting in the Fire.

27 This is the famous saying of al-Ḥallāj. Ibn al-ʿArabī remains faithful to his principle that the human being resembles God in certain aspects.

28 That is, the preservation of one form in a single domain guarantees the preservation in all other domains.

29 This is the perfect human being. Kāshānī, p. 218.

30 Kāshānī, p. 218.

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7 The bezel of the wisdom of loftiness[1] exists in the essence of Ishmael

Know that the (entity) called (*musammā*) God is one with respect to essence and all with respect to names. Each existent has from God only a single lord, and it is inconceivable for it to have all the lords.[2] As for God's Unity (*aḥadiyya*), no single entity enters it, for one cannot call part of it a thing and another a thing, for it does not admit division.[3] However, His Unity is the totality of His attributes in potentiality.

The happy person is the one whose Lord is pleased with him,[4] and there is none but that who is pleasing in the eyes of his Lord, because Lordship applies to everyone, hence the Lord finds everyone pleasing, and so everyone is happy.[5] For this reason Sahl[6] said: Lordship has a mystery – and it is you, ergo Sahl's saying refers to every entity – if it had disappeared, (91) the Lordship would also have been cancelled. The words "if it had disappeared" signify the impossibility of the impossibility (*imtināʿ al-imtināʿ*),[7] for the condition will not appear and hence the Lordship will not be annulled, because an entity is existent only through its lord. Since an entity is always existent, its Lordship will never be cancelled.

Every pleasing thing is beloved, and all that the beloved person does is beloved. All is pleasing, for any entity does not act at all, but God alone acts in it. Any entity is safe from ascription of an act to it, hence it is pleased with that which appears in it and from it, that is, God's acts. These acts are pleasing, for every doer

1 According to al-Qaysarī, this wisdom is ascribed to Ishmael, because God's name the Loftiest, or the Most High (*al-ʿalī*), is manifest in him. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 14.
2 Since each existent is the embodiment of a fixed entity, which in turn is a form of a specific name, the existent is a servant of a specific name.
3 God's Essence is not divided into attributes which are different from each other. Here God's unity stands for the unity in respect to His Essence. See n. 13 below.
4 In these words Qur'ān 19:55 refers specifically to Ishmael.
5 Every individual is under the control of a divine name which serves as his lord. SPK, p. 55.
6 Ch. 6, n. 6, above.
7 This conditional sentence means that because the occurrence of the condition is impossible, the conditioned thing cannot take place. Ibn al-ʿArabī immediately explains this notion. See ch. 5, n. 17, above.

or maker is pleased with his acts, and if He carries out his acts perfectly, it will be appropriate to say of Him: "He gave everything its (measure of) creation then guided (it)" (Qurʾān 20:50),[8] meaning God clarified that He gave everything that which fits it without decrease or increase.[9]

Since Ishmael discovered what we have mentioned, he was pleasing to God.[10] In like manner, every existent is pleasing to his lord. If every existent is pleasing to his lord, as we have explained, it is not necessary that it be pleasing to a lord of another servant, for he took the lordship only from one lord, not from many.[11] What was established for him from all the lords is only that which fits him, and this (what is suited to him) is his lord. No one takes from God (something) which relates to His Unity (*aḥadiyya*).[12] For this reason, the People of God were prevented from the manifestation of God's Unity. That is because if you look at Him through Him, it is He who looks at Himself, and He always looks at Himself through Himself. And if you look at Him through yourself, His Unity disappears through yourself. (And), if you look at Him through Himself and through yourself, Unity also disappears. For the pronoun *tāʾ* in *naẓartahu* (you look) is not the essence of that which you look at (*ʿayn al-manẓūr*), hence there is necessarily a relationship which requires two entities, the one who looks (*nāẓir*) and the one who is looked at (*manẓūr*). Consequently, Unity disappears, even if (God) sees Himself through Himself. It is well known that in this description He is both the observer and the observed.[13]

The pleasing person will be absolutely pleasing only when all things through which he is manifest originate (92) in the action of the one who is pleased with him. Ishmael excels others, for the Real qualified him as pleasing to Him. In like manner it is said to every tranquil soul, "Return to your Lord" (Qurʾān 89:28). God ordered the soul to return only to its Lord who called it and it knows Him from other lords as "pleased and pleasing" (ibid.). (And God said to the soul) "Enter among My servants" (ibid., 29), because they possess this station. Every servant among those mentioned here knows his lord, confining himself to this knowledge without looking at the lord of another, notwithstanding the Unity of the Essence. This is necessarily so. "And enter into My Garden" (*jannatī*)[14] (ibid., 30) which is My place of concealment. My place of concealment is only You, and You

8 This verse is the basis of the theory *taḥqīq*, that is, one's realization that every entity is formed and acts according to the appropriate manner which was decreed by God in its fixed entity (*ʿayn thābita*). SDG, p. 96.

9 One should note that according to Ibn al-ʿArabī also the feeling of being satisfied with God's acts comes from God, otherwise Ibn al-ʿArabī would have stated that perceptions and feelings belong to the human being alone.

10 Qurʾān 19:55.

11 Read: *mā akhadha al-rubūbiyya illā min wāḥid lā min kull*.

12 For this term, see the title of ch. 10.

13 When we speak of God's Unity, we cannot deal with it in terms of duality, even if this duality exists in God's Essence. His Unity excludes any form of duality.

14 The verb *janna* means "he covered or concealed," hence *janna* may be rendered cover, veil, or place of concealment.

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conceal me through Your Essence. I am known only through You, just as You are not (manifest) only through me. Whoever knows You knows me, and I am not known through (another), (just as) You are not known through (another, but through me). When you enter into His place of concealment, you enter into yourself, then you know yourself with another knowledge which is different from the knowledge of yourself when you know your Lord through your knowledge of yourself. As a result, you possess two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of Him through yourself, and knowledge of Him through yourself, with respect to Him, not to you.[15]

You are the servant and you are the lord/of the one you are his servant

You are the lord and you are the servant/of the one who possesses your covenant in His address (to you)[16]

Every contract to which one is committed/can be dissolved by someone else[17]

God is pleased with his servants and they are pleasing. They are pleased with Him and He is pleasing. The two presences (servanthood and lordship) face each other like similar things, because there is no distinction between the two kinds. (However), similar things are opposites, for the two similar things do not join.[18] There is only the one which is distinct and the one which is similar. (Actually), there is neither a similar thing in existence, nor an opposite thing, for existence is one reality (*ḥaqīqa wāḥida*), and a thing does not oppose itself.

(93)

Only the Real remains, no other being/there is no connected thing, and there is no separated thing[19]

The seeing of the eyes proves this and I do not see/when I see but His Essence

"This is for one who fears his Lord" (Qur'ān 98:8), lest he will be Him, because he knows the distinction (between the servant and the lord). What proves this to us is the fact that (some people) are ignorant of things (*aʿyān*) in existence which the knower shows them. There is a distinction between servants and there is a distinction between lords. If there had been no distinction, a certain divine name would have been interpreted according to all its aspects in the same manner as another name is interpreted. The name the Strengthener (*al-muʿizz*) is not interpreted in the same manner as the Debaser (*al-mudhill*), and so on. However, from the point of view of the Unity they are the same. As you say, every name is

15 The first kind of knowledge reveals divine traits in one's soul through rational examination of the soul, while the second makes one find God in his soul. The second kind derives from unveiling which occurs in one's soul, and not from investigation. Affifi, II, pp. 91f.

16 This is an allusion to Qur'ān 7:172, in which all the human generations affirmed God's Lordship.

17 That is because each creed expresses one's speculation and investigation, and it is not characterized by an absolute truth. Hence, it can be replaced by another creed.

18 Here I changed the order of the sentence to make it coherent. According to the Greatest Master, things are similar to each other from certain points of view and opposite to each other from other points of view. However, with respect to the absolute unity of existence, there is no difference between the things.

19 All is one unity.

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a proof of the Essence and of its reality with respect to its ipseity, for the named (*al-musammā*) is one and the Strengthener is the Debaser with respect to the named. However, the Strengthener is not the Debaser with respect to their own entities and realities, for our understanding of each of them is different.

Do not contemplate (only) the Real/(so that) you divest Him of creation

Do not contemplate (only) creation/(so that) you clothe it (in all things) except the Real

Make Him incomparable and comparable/and place yourself in the domain of truth

If you will, be in a state of joining[20]/or in a state of separation

Then, if all[21] is revealed to you/you will gain the greatest success

You will not pass away (in creation) nor remain (in the Real)/and you will not make others either pass away or remain

Revelation is not bestowed on you/and you do not grant revelation to others[22]

Praise (for the people is carried out by God) through faithfulness to the promise (*ṣidq al-waʿd*) and not through faithfulness to the threat. The Divine Presence requires commendable praise through God's Essence. The Essence is praised through faithfulness to the promise and not through faithfulness to the threat, moreover, through overlooking (one's sins).[23] "Do not think (94) that God will break His promise to His Messengers" (Qurʾān 14:47). He does not say "His threat," but rather "We shall overlook their sins" (Qurʾān 46:16), although He made a threat regarding sins. He praised Ishmael, because he was faithful to his promise (*ṣādiq al-waʿd*).[24] Regarding the Real (in his praising of Ishmael), possibility disappears, because possibility requires a preponderant (*murajjiḥ*).[25]

Only the one who is faithful to his promise remains/while the Real's threat has no established essence

Even if they enter the abode of suffering/they have delight therein (and) pure happiness

There is happiness in the eternal gardens, for the matter is one[26]/(only) when God is revealed there is a difference

Suffering (*ʿadhāb*) is so called because of its sweetness (*ʿudhūba*)/this is like a shell, and the shell protects (what is inside).

20 Joining of transcendence and immanence.
21 Both the transcendent and the immanent aspects.
22 If the existence is one, it follows that revelation exists within everyone. Hence, revelation is not bestowed on anyone, nor given to anyone. Bursevi, Vol. II, p. 581.
23 Qurʾān 46:16.
24 Qurʾān 19:54.
25 To decide between possible alternatives, one needs a preponderant which overwhelms all other alternatives, leaving only one choice that seems the best. Consequently, when a person carries out his promise, God is obliged to praise him.
26 By this he means that all the phenomena are one, hence there is no difference from this point of view between Paradise and Hell.

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8 The bezel of the wisdom of spirituality[1] exists in the essence of Jacob

(94) Religion is divided into two kinds: a. Religion according to God and according to whom the Real taught and those who taught others what the Real taught them; and b. Religion according to the created beings, which God acknowledges. God's religion is the one which God chose and granted it the highest degree above the human religion. God said: "Abraham ordered his sons (to submit to God), and so did Jacob, saying: 'My sons, God has chosen for you the religion (*al-dīn*), so do not die except in a state of submission to God (*muslimūn*)" (Qur'ān 2:132), meaning obeying Him. (The word) *al-dīn* is marked with the definite particle (*alif* and *lām*) to designate a specific religion, hence this is a known religion (which is shown) in God's saying: "The religion according to God is Islam" (Qur'ān 3:19), meaning submission. Religion expresses your submission. That which comes from God is the Law to which you submit. Religion means submission and the rule (*al-nāmūs*) is the Law (*al-sharʿ*) which God promulgated. Whoever is qualified as yielding to God's laws is the one who carries out the orders of the religion and maintains them, as one who performs the prayer.

The servant is one who maintains religion and the Real promulgates the laws. Hence, submission is the essence of your act, and religion (95) comes out of your act. You will not be happy except by way of that which comes from yourself. Just as your acts affirm (*athbata*) your happiness, so His acts, which are you and the created beings, affirm the Divine Names. Because of His effects (in the cosmos), He is called God (*ilāh*), and because of your effects (in yourself), you are called happy. When you observe (the commandments of) religion and obey His laws, He makes you equal to His rank. If God wills, I shall expound further on this issue in a beneficial way after explaining religion in the eyes of the created beings which God acknowledges.

Religion as a whole belongs to God and comes (with respect to implementation) from you, not from Him, except with respect to its origin.[2] God said: "They invented monasticism" (Qur'ān 57:27). (Their invention) refers to the wise laws;

1 In keeping with al-Qūnawī's and Kāshānī's commentaries, I prefer *ḥikma rūḥiyya* to *ḥikma rawḥiyya* (wisdom of ease), although the latter possibility has a basis in Qur'ān 12:87. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 17f.

2 That is because God is the origin of all things.

however, these were not brought to the people by the known Messenger through God in the customary way (that is, through prophecy). But as wisdom and plain interest in (these laws) coincide with Divine Judgment regarding the aim of Divine Law, God approved of (these human laws) just as He did of His Laws, (although) "We (God) did not prescribe (these laws) for them" (Qurʾān 57:27).[3]

Since[4] God opened the door of His Providence and Mercy between Him and their hearts of which they were unaware, He established in their hearts the exaltation of the laws they had promulgated – through which they sought God's satisfaction. They did so not in the usual and known prophetic way of divine teaching. Hence God said: "They did not keep their laws" (Qurʾān, ibid.), meaning those who established the laws which I (God) affirmed, "in a proper way, only to seek God's satisfaction" (Qurʾān, ibid.). So they thought. "We gave those who believed," in these laws, "among them their reward, (however) many of them" (Qurʾān, ibid.), meaning of those for whom this worship was established, "are sinners" (Qurʾān, ibid.), meaning they did not submit to these laws and did not keep them.

Whoever does not obey these laws, his legislator will not comply with what pleases him. However, the matter necessitates obedience, meaning the one under obligation (*mukallaf*) is either obedient through acceptance of the laws, or a transgressor. There is no need to talk about the one who obeys and accepts the laws, because this is obvious. As for the transgressor, his transgression which was determined for him by God requests either one of two things: disregard and forgiveness or rebuke (96) for what he did. One of these options should apply, because essentially the matter requires one of the two. Anyhow, it is correct (to say that) the Real submits to the servant's acts and state. It is the state which affects (God's reaction). From this (it is evident) that religion means requital (*jazāʾ*), meaning compensation for that which makes one happy or unhappy. As for that which makes one happy, God said: "God is pleased with them, and they with Him" (Qurʾān 5:119, trans. AH). This is a compensation that makes one happy. As for that which makes one unhappy, God said: "Whoever among you who does wrong, we shall make him taste a severe punishment" (Qurʾān 25:19). This is a compensation that does not make one happy. "We shall disregard their evil deeds" (Qurʾān 46:16) is (also) redress. Hence, it is correct (to say) that religion is compensation. That is because religion is *islām* and *islām* is essentially submission; God submits to what makes one happy or unhappy, which means compensation. This is the external aspect in this issue.

As for its mystery and internal aspect, it manifests itself in the mirror of the Real's existence; the possible things receive from the Real only that which their essences give them in each state. For each state has a form. Their forms differ according to the differences in their states. Hence, the manifestation differs because of the difference in the state, and the effect on the servant occurs

3 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to speak of laws promulgated by people before revelation. Rationalist as well as orthodox thinkers advanced this notion. Kevin A. Reinhart, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Muslim Moral Thought*, New York 1995.

4 Read *lammā*. Kāshānī, p. 236.

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in accordance with what characterizes him. No one bestows on him good or evil except himself; only he bestows on his essence favors and sufferings. He should chastise and praise only himself. "To God belongs the conclusive argument" (Qurʾān 6:149) in his knowledge of them, for knowledge follows the object of knowledge.[5] In an issue like this, the mystery that lies behind it is (the notion) that the possible things in principle are nonexistent. There is no existence but the existence of the Real (which is disclosed) through the forms of the states in which the possible things appear in themselves and in their (fixed) essences. Consequently, you know whoever experiences pleasure and whoever experiences pain and what follows (*yaʿqubu*) each state, because of which it is called following (*ʿuqūba*) and consequence (*ʿiqāb*).[6] (This idea of following) is allowable in relation to both good and evil; however, convention calls the good – reward, and the evil – punishment. Because of this procedure religion may be called or explained as what returns (*ʿāda*, usually: custom), for that which his state requires and seeks returns to him (*ʿāda ʿalayhi*). Hence, religion is that which returns.[7] The poet said: "As your religion with Umm al-Ḥuwayrith before" (97), meaning your custom.

The rational meaning of *ʿāda* is the return of the thing itself to its (previous) state. However, this is not the case here, for *ʿāda* means repetition. But *ʿāda* is an intelligible reality, and resemblance in forms exists. That is, because we know that Zayd is the same as ʿAmr with respect to humanity (*insāniyya*), but humanity does not repeat itself, for if it does, it will be multiplied; however, humanity is one reality that does not repeat itself. (Also) we know that Zayd is not the same as ʿAmr in terms of individual identity (*shakhsiyya*), for Zayd as an individual is not the same as ʿAmr, though we certainly know that the existence of individuality is shared by both. Through sense perception resemblance repeats itself; however, through true judgment resemblance does not repeat itself. From one point of view there is a repetition and from another there is not. In like manner, in one respect there is a reward, and in another there is not; that is because reward is a possible state. The scholars probing this issue did not pay attention to it; that is, they paid no attention to its explanation, not that they did not know it, because it belongs to the mystery of predetermination which governs the created beings.

Know that just as it is said of a physician that he is the servant of nature, so the Messengers and the Heirs are the servants of the Divine Command in general, and actually they are the servants of the states of the possible things.[8] Their service is part of their states which have been established by their fixed entities. Consider what a marvelous thing this is! However, the servant, of whom we are

5 SDG, p. 186.

6 From the perspective of the Real, that which follows the states is called following or consequence. Ibn al-ʿArabī immediately explains that in this world that which follows the states is called either reward or punishment. This is a revolutionary idea, according to which, with respect to the Existence, good and evil play no role.

7 One's states cause the human being to perform acts repeatedly, and this characterizes religion.

8 For the term *amr* (command), its role in the cosmological and terrestrial domains and its Ismāʿīlī origin, see Ebstein, "The Word of God," pp. 44–50.

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talking here, is restricted regarding saying and state by his lord's rules. It is correct to say that the physician is a servant of nature, only if he helps nature. That is because nature put in the body of the ill person a unique temperament (*mizāj*) because of which he is called an ill person. If the physician were to help nature through his service, he would also increase the measure of illness (98). He prevents nature (from worsening the illness) only in order to seek health – and health also belongs to nature – through introducing another temperament that opposes the present temperament. Hence, the physician is not a servant of nature (regarding all aspects); he only serves it through curing the ill person and changing his temperament by using nature itself. Regarding nature, he exerts efforts by using a particular, not a general aspect, because generality is not correct in such an issue. Hence, the physician is servant/not servant of nature, just as messengers and heirs are regarding the servitude of the Real.

In determining the states of those who are under obligation (*mukallafīn*), the Real acts through two aspects: The servant acts in accordance with the requirements of the Real's will, and His will in turn is connected to what the Real's knowledge requires, and the Real's knowledge is connected to what the object of knowledge bestows on Him, that is, its essence, which appears only in its form.[9]

The Messenger and the Heir are servants of the divine command by way of the will (*irāda*);[10] however, they are not servants of the will. He (the Messenger) refutes the divine command by way of the divine command seeking for the happiness of the person under obligation. If he were the servant of the divine will, he would not advise (people), or would advise (people) only through the divine will. The Messenger, the Heir, is the physician of the souls for the world to come. He obeys God's command when He commands him. He may observe His command and will and sees that God's command opposes His will, (knowing) that all things occur according to His will, and for this reason the command stands. If He wills the fulfillment of the command, it will be fulfilled, and if He does not will the fulfillment of what He commands, the person under obligation will not carry out the command, and this is called transgression and sin.

The messenger is a transmitter (of God's commands and sayings). For this reason he (Muḥammad) said: "Hūd and its sisters made me anxious" (literally: made my hair white),[11] because they (these *sūra*s) contain God's saying: "So keep to

9 God's knowledge is determined by the essence of the thing which is its fixed entity (*ʿayn thābita*). Thus, God is compelled to act in keeping with His knowledge, and has no free choice. SDG, pp. 186f. This is the logical conclusion of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas, although he says that free choice and compulsion do not apply to God. Our author seems to be inconsistent in his thought, because one cannot describe a series of cause-effect, that is, will, knowledge, the fixed entity, and then deny the consequence of one's thought, claiming that this procedure is irrelevant. Moreover, he asserts that God's choice is expressed in bestowing existence on the fixed entities. Thus, God has some kind of free choice. As in other issues in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings, God has and does not have free choice. Ibid. Another point worth noting is the absence of discussion in Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine on when and how God produces the fixed entities.

10 *Irāda* is God's power to bring into existence potential existents. Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, p. 160.

11 Tirmidhī, 3297. Dagli, p. 93, n. 30.

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the right course, as you have been commanded" (Qurʾān 11:112, trans. AH). (99) The words "as you have been commanded" made him anxious, because he did not know whether the command fitted His will and hence would be implemented, or opposed His Will, and hence would not be implemented. No one knows the way of the will (*ḥukm al-irāda*), until the object of the will occurs, except one to whom God has revealed his insight, and as a result he perceives the possible things as they really are in their states as fixed entities and thereupon he judges according to his insight. This may happen to a very few individuals in times of seclusion. (Consequently), the Prophet said: "I do not know what will be done with me or you" (Qurʾān 46:9, trans. AH). He (the Prophet) explicitly said of the veil (existing between God and the humans). The aim (of this verse) is to inform that the Prophet had knowledge only of some things, not all things.

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9 The bezel of the wisdom of light[1] exists in the essence of Joseph

(99) The light of this bright wisdom spreads over the presence of Imagination, which is the first principle of Divine Revelation among the people under God's Providence (*fī ahl al-ʿināya*).[2] ʿĀʾisha said: "The first revelation to the Messenger of God, may God bless him and give him peace, was a true dream. Each of his dreams was clear like the breaking dawn, no obscurity therein."[3] Her knowledge stops here. The period (of these revelations) continued six months, then the angel came to him. She did not know that the Messenger of God said: "People are asleep, and when they die, they awake up."[4] Everything one sees while awake[5] is like this, even if the states (of sleep and wakefulness) are different. She spoke of six months; however, his whole life in this world should be gauged in this manner, that is, as a dream within a dream (*manām fī manām*).[6] All things of this kind belong to the world of imagination (*ʿālam al-khayāl*), and for this reason they are interpreted, meaning a thing that is essentially in a certain form appears in another form. (100) Hence, the interpreter (*ʿābir*),[7] if he is correct, passes from the form seen by the sleeper to the true (meaningful) form it is. This is like the appearance of knowledge in the form of milk.[8] In his interpretation, the Prophet passed from the

1 This chapter is so called because Joseph was connected with dreams and their interpretations, and the world of dreams, the world of imagination, is part of the spiritual side of the cosmos. Spirits have the power of unveiling and hence are characterized by light, whereas the concrete world, by darkness. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 18–20; Idem, "Ibn ʿArabī's Summary," pp. 20f.

2 In simple words, Ibn al-ʿArabī wants to say that revelation, which is symbolized by light, reaches humans through the imagination, that is, in their dreams.

3 Bukhārī 1:3 (3).

4 This tradition does not appear in the great collections of traditions, but it is frequently cited by Sufi authors. Dagli, p. 95, n. 4; SPK, p. 396.

5 I used Kāshānī's reading (p. 246), which seems appropriate to the context, because what we call the concrete world is also unreal. Our text has *fī ḥāl al-nawm* (while asleep). Cf. *Sharḥ*, p. 122.

6 That is because life is unreal, it is imagination, and when one dreams, his dream is within a dream.

7 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the active participle of the first form (*ʿabara*) to denote "interpreter." Generally one uses the word *muʿabbir*, the active participle of the second form, which has the same meaning.

8 For the interpretation of milk, see ch. 6, p. 56.

form of milk to the form of knowledge, explaining that the form of milk is attributed to the form of knowledge.

When the Prophet received revelation, he was detached from ordinary sensory perception and was covered by a dress, being unaware of his company. After he was freed from (the state of inspiration), he was restored (to his previous state). His perception occurs only in the presence of imagination; however, he was not said to be asleep. In like manner, the angel (Jibrīl) appeared to him in the form of a man, and this (appearance) derived from the presence of imagination, for he was not a man but an angel, who assumed the form of a human. The observer, the gnostic, interpreted this appearance until he reached the real form, saying: "This is Jibrīl, who came to you to teach you your religion."[9] Then he (the gnostic) said: "Bring this man back to me." He called him a man, due to the form in which he appeared to them. Then he said: "This is Jibrīl," realizing the origin of this imagined man. He was right in both statements: the first based on his sense of sight and the second on (the real knowledge) that he was Jibrīl without doubt.[10]

Joseph said: "I saw (in my dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating before me" (Qurʾān 12:4). He saw his brothers in the form of stars and his father and stepmother in the form of the sun and the moon. This (seeing) was from Joseph's viewpoint. However, if it (the scene) were seen from the viewpoint of those in it, then the appearance of his brothers in the form of stars and the appearance of his father and stepmother in the form of the sun and the moon would be very pleasing to them. Since (his brothers) did not know what Joseph had seen, the latter's perception was preserved in his imagination. When Joseph told him his dream, Jacob was aware (of the danger) and said: "Do not tell your dream to your brothers, lest they plot against you" (ibid., 5). Then he pardoned (101) his sons of this plot and ascribed it to the Devil, who is the essence of plotting, and said: "The Devil is a clear enemy of the humans" (ibid.); that is, (his) enmity is manifest. After that Joseph finally said: "This is the interpretation of my earlier dream. God made it true" (ibid., 100), meaning that God made it manifest to the senses, after it had been in imaginative form. The Prophet Muḥammad said: "People are asleep," and Joseph's saying "God made it true" is like (the state) of one who sees in his sleep that he wakes up from a dream and then interprets it. He does not know that he is still asleep, but when he wakes up, he says: "I saw this, and I saw myself apparently waking up and I interpreted the dream." This is Joseph's experience. Think about the difference between Muḥāmmad's perception and Joseph's when the latter said at last: "This is the interpretation of my earlier dream. God made it true." This is sensory perception which could not be otherwise. That is because imagination conveys only the objects of senses, and no other objects. Consider how exalted the knowledge of Muḥammad's heirs is. I shall expand my sayings concerning this matter using Joseph's words (uttered in the spirit of) Muḥammad, so that you may know, if God wills.

9 Muslim, 1:1 (5).

10 Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses the beginning of revelation in al-Tirmidhī's question number 25 (*Futūḥāt*, Vol. III, pp. 88f, ch. 73) and in ch. 188 (*Futūḥāt*, Vol. IV, pp. 7f).

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Know that which is said about "other than the Real" or that which is called the cosmos relates to the Real as the shadow relates to a person. The cosmos is God's shadow. This relationship is the same as the Existence is to the cosmos, for the shadow undoubtedly exists in the senses. However, there must be a substrate in which the shadow appears. Even if you assumed the absence of such a substrate, the shadow would still be intelligible but not existent in the senses, and the shadow would be potentially in the essence of the thing which casts the shadow. The substrate of the appearance of this divine shadow, called the cosmos, is the (fixed) entities of (102) the possible things (*aʿyān al-mumkināt*) over which the shadow spreads out. Thus, from the extension of this shadow, one can perceive the measure of the existence of this Essence. It is by virtue of His name Light perception occurs, and this shadow spreads out over the fixed entities of the possible things in the form of unknown mystery.[11]

Do you not see that shadows incline to the black color, thus pointing to their hiddenness because of the remoteness between them and the things that cast them? Even if an object is white, its shadow will be black. Do you not see the mountains that are distant from the observer appear to be black, but actually they might be of another color? Is there a cause of this but distance? The same is true as regards the blueness of the sky. This is what the effect of distance produces in the sense (of sight) with regard to non-luminous bodies. In like manner, the fixed entities of the possible things (*aʿyān al-mumkināt*) are non-luminous, because they are non-existent, even if they are described as fixed. However, they are not described as existent, for existence is light. Furthermore, distance causes the luminous bodies to appear small, thus this is another effect of distance. The sense (of sight) perceives them as small, but they are actually bigger than what is seen. As we know by proof, the sun is one hundred sixty times the size of the earth; however, by the sense of sight it appears no larger than a shield. This is also the effect of distance. One knows of the cosmos (only) by the measure of what one knows of shadows.

Similarly, the Real is not known just as the object which causes the appearance of the shadow is not known. He is known from the point of view of His shadow but not from the point of view of the essence of the producer of the shadow. For this reason, we say that the Real is known from one aspect and not known from another. "Do you not see how your Lord lengthens the shadow; if He had willed, He would have made it rest" (Qurʾān 25:45), meaning the shadow exists in Him potentially. We say[12] that the Real cannot reveal Himself (*mā kāna al-ḥaqq li-yatajallā*) to the possible things until (103) He makes the shadow appear, and the shadow (before its appearance) is like the possible things that do not have yet concrete existence. Then "We made the sun a sign for Him"[13] (Qurʾān, ibid.), (this

11 Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to say that God's Light illuminates the fixed entities, and as a result of this illumination shadows appear. As our author said before, these shadows are the possible things in the concrete world.

12 The text has "He says" (*yaqūlu*), which does not seem logical, albeit Kāshānī (p. 254) ascribes the verb to God.

13 According to the usual commentaries, the sun is the sign for the shadow. However, in Ibn al-ʿArabī it serves as a sign for God, who is light.

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sign) is the name of the Real, that is, the Light mentioned above, and the sense (of sight) witnesses it, for shadows exist in concrete form only when light exists. "Thereafter We seize it to Ourselves, drawing it gently" (Qurʾān 25:46, trans. Arberry). He seizes it (the shadow) to Himself only because it is His shadow, from Him it appears and to Him all things return,[14] for the shadow is He, and no other. All we perceive is the existence of the Real in the concrete possible things. Regarding the ipseity (*huwiyya*)[15] of the Real, (we can only speak of) His existence, (whereas) regarding the variety of forms in Him, He is the concrete possible things. Just as the name shadow does not disappear from Him because of the variety of forms, so the name the cosmos does not disappear because of the variety of forms or any other name except for the Real. With respect to His Unity (*aḥadiyya*) as a shadow, He is the Real, because He is the Unique, the One, and with respect to the multiplicity of forms, He is the cosmos. Hence (you should) understand and ascertain what I have elucidated for you.

If the matter is as I have pointed out to you, then the cosmos is an illusion, having no real existence. This is the meaning of imagination. You imagine that the cosmos is something separate, existing by virtue of itself (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) and unconnected to the Real, but actually this is not so.

Do you not see it (the shadow) by your sense of sight as connected to the object from which it extends? It is inconceivable that the shadow should be separated from this connection, because it is inconceivable that a thing should be separated from its essence. As a result, you should know your essence, who you are, what your ipseity is, and what your relationship to the Real is. (Also you should know) through which thing you are real and through which thing you are the cosmos, the other, and the unlike, and words like these. In this matter scholars excel one another, and therefore try to better each other in knowledge (*fa-ʿālim wa-aʿlam*)[16] and to know (more)!

The Real in relation to a specific shadow (may it be) small or big, pure or purest, is like a light in relation to a glass that comes between the light and the beholder; the light takes the color of the glass, while at the same time it has no color. In this manner you are made to see the Real through giving (you) similes (104) of your reality (which proceeds) from your Lord. If you say the light is green because of the greenness of the glass, you are right, as your sense (of sight) bears witness. And if you say the light is not green and has no color, because you use a logical proof, you are right, as your witness is based on sound, rational speculation (*al-naẓar al-ʿaqlī al-ṣaḥīḥ*). This is a light which extends from a shadow, which is a concrete glass, and this is a luminous shadow because of its purity.[17]

14 Qurʾān 11:123.

15 *Huwiyya* can also be rendered as He-ness or Essence. It signifies that which is unknown regarding God. SPK, p. 394, n. 15.

16 Lane, *An Arabic English Lexicon*, s.v.

17 Here also the light is God's Essence and the glass represents the world. The different colors seen are produced by the light which passes through the glass. Affifi, II, pp. 111f. Just as in the previous simile, the shadows, which are produced by the light that is cast on the world, are the possible things in the world, so are the different colors.

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Likewise, (regarding) whoever among us who assumes his reality (*mutaḥaqqiq*) through the Real, the form of the Real appears in him more intensively than it appears in others. The Real becomes the hearing, the sight, and all the faculties and organs of some among us through signs which religion conveys about the Real. Despite this,[18] the essence of the shadow exists, for the pronoun "his" (in his hearing – *samʿuhu*) refers back to the Real as a shadow, and other servants (of God) do not gain such a position.[19] The relationship of such a servant to the existence of the Real is closer than the relationship of other servants to this (existence).

If the matter is as we have established, know that you are imagination and all that you perceive; that is, for example, your statement about imagination that "I am not" (imagination) is imagination. All existence is imagination within imagination. The only true existence is God, especially as regards His Essence and Reality, and not as regards His names, because His names have two meanings, the first is His Essence, the Essence of the named (God), and the second is that which the name indicates, that is, what distinguishes a name from another. There is a great difference between the Forgiving on the one hand and the Manifest and the Hidden on the other, the same with regard to the First and the Last. This becomes clear to you through (the notion that) each name is identical to another in essence and through (the notion that) each name differs from another. With respect to the Essence, each name is the Real, and with respect to the otherness, it is the imagined Real (*al-ḥaqq al-mutakhayyal*) which concerns us.

Glory be to Him who has no sign pointing to Him but Himself and whose being is proved only through His Essence. Only that to which God's Unity points exists in the cosmos, and only multiplicity points to that which exists in the imagination. Whoever adheres to multiplicity stays with the cosmos, the divine names, and the names of the cosmos. And whoever adheres to God's Unity stays with the Real with respect to His Essence, which dispenses with all things (*ʿālamīn*). If God's Essence dispenses with all things, this is (105) the Essence's dispensing with the names connected to it, because just as the names point to the Essence, so they point to other named entities which are ascertained by their effects. "Say, this is God (*allāh*), He is one" (Qurʾān 112:1) with respect to His Essence, "God who is sought by all" (*al-ṣamad*, ibid., 2) with respect to our reliance on Him, "He did not beget" (ibid., 3) with respect to His Ipseity and to us, "and He was not begotten" (ibid.) "and has no equal" (ibid., 4), also with respect to His Ipseity and to us. This is His qualification, and He singled out His Essence saying, "God is one," and the multiplicity appeared through His qualities which are known to us. We beget and are begotten and rely on Him, and we are equal one to another. This Unique Entity is free of these qualities and dispenses with them just as He dispenses with us. The Real has no lineage except (that which is said) in this *sūra*, the *sūra* of purification

18 Despite the fact that the tradition (See p. 24 above) speaks of God, it refers to the shadow.

19 Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to say that these shadows, hearing, sight, etc., are produced in the human being when God's light illuminates His attributes of the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing, thus producing shadows of these attributes in the human being.

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from multiplicity (*ikhlāṣ*); for this purpose it was revealed.[20] God's Unity with respect to the divine names which require us (our existence) is the Unity of many (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*), and God's unity with respect to His dispensing with us and with the names is the Unity of the Essence (*aḥadiyyat al-ʿayn*). The name One applies to both kinds of unity. Know this!

The Real brought the shadows into existence and made them prostrate and cast themselves to the right and to the left, only to (serve) as signs for you, indicating your existence and His.[21] That way you can know yourself and your relationship to Him and His relationship to you. Also (God brought the shadows into existence) to let you know from where or from what divine reality all that is other than the Real is described through absolute need for God and through relative need for each other, and to let you know from where or from what reality the Real is described as one who dispenses with people and with all things, whereas the (things in the) cosmos sometimes need others with respect to their essence and sometimes not. (All things in) the cosmos essentially need causes. The greatest cause for them is the Real, whose causality is embodied in the divine names which all things need. The divine names mean each name which the things are in need of (106), that is, things of the cosmos or the Essence of the Real, which is God, no other. For this reason God said: "People, you are needful of God, and God does not need you, He is the Praised" (Qurʾān 35:15). It is well known that we need each other. Hence, our names are His, for without doubt we need Him. Actually, our essences are His shadow, and nothing else. He is at the same time our ipseity and not our ipseity. We have paved the way for you, so contemplate!

20 This chapter of the Qurʾān denies of God any connection to the cosmos.
21 This is a paraphrase of Qurʾān 16:48.

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10 The bezel of the wisdom of unity[1] exists in the essence of Hūd

(106) The Straight Path[2] belongs to God/It is universally manifest not hidden
His Essence exists in young and old people/in the ignorant and in the knower
For this reason, His Mercy encompasses/everything[3] be it despicable or exalted

"There is no creature (*dabba*) which He does not seize its forelock.[4] Verily, my Lord acts according to a straight path" (Qur'ān 11:56). Every moving creature walks according to God's Straight Path. Those (who walk according to the Straight Path) are not the object of God's anger in this respect, nor do they go astray.[5] Just as going astray is accidental, so is the divine wrath, and (all things) go back to God's Mercy which encompasses everything and precedes (His Wrath).[6] All things other than God are creatures, because they possess a spirit.[7] There is nothing that moves by virtue of itself, but everything moves by virtue of another. Each thing moves according to God's Straight Path, which serves as a path only by walking according to it (literally: on it).

If creation submits to you/the Real submits to you
And if the Real submits to you/creation may not follow (Him in submission)
Hence, ascertain what we say concerning Him/for all my saying is true
(107) There is no existent that you see in the cosmos/which does not speak
Nor is there a creation seen by the eyes/but its essence is the Real
The Real is deposited in creation/for this reason, the forms of creation are His.

1 Unity (*aḥadiyya)* denotes God as an entity which cannot accept manyness. It is the pure one, the ineffable Essence. Yahya, "Theophanies and Lights," pp. 35f. However, Ibn al-ʿArabi, as we have seen partly, distinguishes between God's Unity, which designates His transcendence and God with respect to His attributes and names. In this chapter he discusses the third kind of God's Unity, that is, the divine acts, which are the outcome of the second kind of unity.

2 *Al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* appears for the first time in Qur'ān 1:6.

3 A paraphrase of Qur'ān7:156.

4 By this phrase the author means that God directs every creature.

5 A paraphrase of Qur'ān 1:7.

6 A paraphrase of Bukhārī 7553 which reads "My Mercy precedes My Wrath" (*sabaqat raḥmatī ghadabī*).

7 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, everything in the cosmos has a spirit, including inanimate things, because they are manifestations of God's names and as such partake in God's life. SDG, pp. 81–86. SPK, p. 302.

Know that the divine experiential sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya al-dhawqiyya*) which the People of God experience are different by virtue of the difference of the faculties from which these experiences derive, although they go back to one Essence.[8] That is because God says: "I have been his hearing by which he hears, his seeing by which he sees, his hand by which he seizes, and his foot by which he walks."[9] God points out that His Essence (*huwiyya*) is the essence of the human being's organs, which is the essence of the servant. However, the essence is one, while the organs are many. Each organ possesses an experiential science peculiar to that organ. Each science originates in one essence, but differs in accordance with a specific organ. This is like water, which possesses one essence, but differs in taste according to its place. Some water is sweet and fresh and some is salty and bitter;[10] however, it is water in all its states and its essence does not change, even if its tastes vary.

This wisdom pertains to the science of "feet," for as God says concerning the nourishment of those who uphold His scriptures: "And from below" (literally: from beneath their feet – Qurʾān 5:66).[11] For the way, which is the (Straight) Path, means something to be traveled along and walked on, and walking is done only on foot. This witnessing (*shuhūd*) concerning the seizing of the forelocks by the one who is on the Straight Path (God) produces only this particular kind of experiential sciences. "And We[12] shall drive the sinners" (Qurʾān 19:86), those who deserve the station to which He will drive them by the wind, which pushes them from behind. He will destroy them by this wind, because of (the sins) of their souls. He will seize their forelocks, while the wind is driving them – what drives them is their desires to which they cling – to the Hell, which is the distance (between them and God) imagined by them.

(108) Since He drives them to this place, they attain the essence of nearness to Him, for the distance disappears, and the term Hell no longer applies to them. They attain the grace of nearness, because being sinners they deserve it.[13] He does not give them this pleasurable experiential station as a gift. They take it, only because they deserve it owing to their acts. In carrying out their acts they are on the Lord's Straight Path, for their forelocks are at the hands of the one who has this attribute (of seizing forelocks). They do not walk by themselves but under compulsion until they reach the essence of nearness to Him. "We are nearer to him (to a dying person) than you, but you (his relatives) do not know" (literally: do

8 God has all kinds of experiences which He bestows on people, each in keeping with the predisposition of the individual.

9 See above p. 24.

10 Cf. Qurʾān 35:12.

11 Qurʾān 5:66 reads: "If they had upheld the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have been given abundance from above and from below: some of them are on the right course, but many of them – how evil is what they do!" (trans. AH).

12 The text in Affifi's edition reads: *wa-yasūqu* (he drives), which seems to be an error. In Kāshānī's and Sharḥ's text, the word *nasūqū* appears as in the Qurʾān.

13 The paradox here is that even the evildoers, who suffer in Hell, come near to God. *Sharḥ*, pp. 138f.

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not see; Qurʾān 56:85). Only the dying person knows, for the veil is removed, and "his knowledge (literally: his sight) is sharp" (Qurʾān 50:22).[14] The Qurʾān does not single out one dying person from another; that is, it does not single out a happy (*saʿīd*) from an unhappy (*shaqī*) person with respect to nearness (to God). "We are nearer to him than his jugular vein" (Qurʾān 50:16). The Qurʾān does not single out one person from another. The divine nearness to the human being is not hidden in the divine message. Nothing is closer to the human being than his organs and faculties, and the human being constitutes only his organs and faculties, for he is an attested reality (*ḥaqq mashhūd*) in an imagined creation. The believers and people of unveiling and finding (*ahl al-kashf wa'l-wujūd*) hold that creation is intelligible and the Real is sensible and perceivable; (however), others except these two groups hold that the Real is intelligible and creation is perceivable. The latter are like salty and bitter water, while the former are like sweet and pleasant water, tasty to drink.

People are divided into two groups: a. those who walk on a way they know and whose aim they cognize, and this way is with respect to them a straight path; and b. those who walk on a way they do not know and whose aim is not cognized by them. This way is the same as that known to the first group. The knower calls God out of knowledge (*ʿalā baṣīra*),[15] while the one who does not know calls God out of uncritical belief (*taqlīd*) (109) and ignorance. This is a specific knowledge which comes from the lowest of the low (*asfal sāfilīn*),[16] for the feet are the lowest parts of the human being, and lower still is the way beneath the feet. Whoever knows that the Real is the essence of the way, truly knows reality, for in Him you walk and travel, because there is no known object but He. He is both the essence of existence and the walker and the traveler. There is no knower but He, and who are you? Know your reality and your way, for reality became clear to you through the tongue of the Transmitter (*turjumān*),[17] if you understand. He is the true (*ḥaqq*) tongue, and only the one whose understanding is true understands Him, for the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) has many relations and various aspects.

Do you not think of ʿĀd, the people of Hūd, and how "they said: 'This cloud will give us rain'" (Qurʾān 46:24. trans. AH)? They think well of the Lord, Who appears as the human being thinks of Him. The Real made them turn away from this saying and informed them of something more complete and exalted concerning nearness (to Him). For, when He gave them rain, which is the share of the earth, and watered the seed, they attained the fruit of this rain only after a long time. Therefore He said to them: "No indeed! It is what you wanted to hasten: a (hurricane) wind bearing a painful punishment" (ibid., trans. AH). He made the wind (*rīḥ*) an allusion of the comfort (*rāḥa*) which is therein, for through this wind

14 The whole verse reads: "You paid no attention to this (Day); but today we have removed your veil and your sight is sharp." By Day the Qurʾān means the Resurrection.
15 For this phrase, see Qurʾān 12:108.
16 This idiom appears in Qurʾān 95:5.
17 The Transmitter is Muḥammad. See pp. 15, 22, 66.

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He released them (*arāḥahum*)[18] from the darkness of their bodies (literally: temples *hayākil*), from the rough roads and from the deep darkness. In this wind there is *ʿadhāb*, that is, something they find sweet when they taste it, although it causes them pain, because they are unaccustomed to it. The punishment touched them and was nearer to them than anything they had imagined. By God's command the wind destroyed everything and "in the morning there was nothing to see except their (ruined) dwellings" (ibid., 25., trans. AH), which are their dead bodies in which their essential spirits lived. The firm and special relationship (between the spirits and their bodies) disappeared and the life characteristic of the bodies (without spirits) remained in their bodies, that is, the Real made the skin, hands, feet, tips of the lashes, and the thighs to express (themselves).[19] The divine text attests to all this.[20]

However, God describes Himself as Other (or Jealous),[21] and because of His otherness (jealousy) He "forbade (110) disgraceful deeds (or excesses *fawāḥish*)" (Qurʾān 7:33). *Faḥsh* is only what is manifest. As for the *faḥsh* of the unmanifest, it is possessed by the one for whom it is manifest.[22] Hence, God forbade excesses, that is, prevented people from knowing the reality which we mentioned, meaning that He is the Essence of things. He concealed the reality through His otherness (*ghayra*), which stems from (the word) other (*ghayr*). Actually, He is identical to you (*wa-huwa anta*). The other says that hearing belongs only to Zayd, whereas the gnostic says that hearing is the Essence of the Real and so are other faculties and organs.[23] Not everyone knows the Real; people surpass each other, and their ranks are different, so it becomes clear who is most excellent (*fāḍil*) and who is excellent (*maf̣dūl*).[24]

Know that when the Real made me see and witness his human messengers and prophets themselves, from Adam to Muḥammad, in a location of witnessing (*mashhad*) where I was placed in Cordova in the year 586 (AH), no one in this group spoke to me except Hūd. He informed me of the reason for their assembly. I saw him as a big man in relation to other men, handsome, who conversed in a subtle way, one who knows and reveals things. My proof of his (faculty) of revealing is his saying: "There is no creature (*dabba*) which He does not seize its forelock. Verily, my Lord acts according to a straight path" (Qurʾān 11:56).

18 *Rīḥ*, *rāḥa*, and *arāḥa* originate in the root *r.w.ḥ*.
19 Even the inanimate body has a certain kind of life.
20 See Qurʾān 41:20, 21.
21 He is jealous of His existence, claiming that only He really exists.
22 The notion that excesses whether manifest or unmanifest refer to the same object is based on the verse noted above.
23 The other, who regards himself as different from God, ascribes Zayd's hearing to Zayd himself, ignoring the truth, known by the gnostic, that Zayd's hearing is identical to God's Essence. Here the author alludes to the tradition of the supererogatory works. See above p. 24.
24 *Maf̣dūl* is exactly one-who-is-known-to-be-excelled by others. These two terms are usually employed in discussions on the Imamate. B. Abrahamov, "Al-Ḳāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's Theory of the Imamate," *Arabica* 34 (1987), p. 89.

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What good news for people is better than this? God bestowed on us His favor when he brought Hūd's statement in the Qurʾān. Muḥammad, who embraced everything, completed Hūd's saying by telling us about the Real who is the essence of (our) hearing and seeing, and of (our) hands, feet, and tongue, meaning He is the essence of our senses. The spiritual faculties are nearer (to the human being) than the senses, therefore God contented Himself with the more distant faculties that can be defined, rather than the nearer faculties that cannot be defined. The Real transmitted (*tarjama*)[25] Hūd's statement as good tidings to us, and God's messenger transmitted from God Hūd's statement also as good tidings. Thus, knowledge became perfect in the hearts of those who received it. "Only the unbelievers (or those who conceal – *al-kāfirūn*)[26] deny Our signs" (Qurʾān 29:47). That is because they concealed the signs, even if they knew them, out of envy, rivalry,[27] and injustice (*ẓulm*). We consider what comes to us from God concerning God in a Qurʾānic verse or in another kind of transmission which He delivered for us only in terms of limitation, whether limited by transcendence (*tanzīh*) or any other kind of characterization.

(111) The first limitation is the Cloud (*ʿamāʾ*) which has no air above or beneath it.[28] The Real came to be in it before He created the creation. Then He said that He "Sat Himself upon the Throne" (Qurʾān 7:54, trans. Arberry), which is also a limitation. He then said that He descends to the lower heaven, which is yet another limitation.[29] He also said that He is in the heaven and on the earth,[30] and that He is with us wherever we are,[31] until He informed us that He is our essence.[32] We are limited; therefore, He can describe Himself only in terms of limitation. And His saying "There is nothing like Him (*ka-mithlihi*)" (Qurʾān 42:11) is also a limitation, if we regard the *kāf* as redundant and not descriptive. That which is distinguished from the limited thing is itself limited, because of its being distinct from the limited thing. Being free of limitation is limitation, and one who understands (knows that) the free (the unlimited) thing is limited by its freedom. If we regard *kāf* as a particle for description, we limit Him.[33] If we understand by "There is nothing like Him" the denial of comparison (of God to others), we verify the true sense and the correct information that He is the essence of things, and the things

25 For this verb as designating transmission, see above, pp. 15, 22, 66, 76.
26 For *kafara* in the meaning of "he concealed," see above, p. 42f.
27 Read *munāfasa* instead of *nafāsa*.
28 This sentence is based on a *ḥadīth* (Tirmidhī, 3109) translated in SPK (p. 125) as follows: The Prophet was asked: "Where (*ayn*) did your Lord come to be (*kān*) before He created the creatures (*al-khalq*)?" He replied: "He came to be in a cloud, neither above which nor below which was any air (*hawāʾ*)." For more references to this tradition, see SPK, p. 397, n. 1.
29 For a detailed discussion of this tradition (Bukhārī, 1145), see Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ ḥadīth al-nuzūl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khamīs, Al-Riyāḍ 1993.
30 Cf. Qurʾān 43:84.
31 Cf. Qurʾān 57:4.
32 He might refer here to the tradition of the supererogatory acts. See above, p. 24.
33 *Ka-mithilih* is identical to *mithl mithlihi*, meaning that there is nothing like His image; that is, He has an image, but this image is different from other images.

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are limited, even if their limitations are different. He is limited by the limitation of every limited thing. A thing is limited only by the limitation of the Real. He permeates that which is called the created and the produced things, and were it not the case, existence would not come to be. He is the Essence of existence and He is "the preserver of everything" (Qur'ān 11:57, 34:21) by His Essence; the preservation of everything "does not weary Him" (Qur'ān 2:255). His preservation of all things means His preservation of His form lest the thing assume a different form, which is inconceivable. He is both witness and witnessed. The cosmos is His form, and He is the spirit of the cosmos and directs it, and He is the Great Man (Macrocosm).

He is all being/and the one by whose
Being I came to be/therefore I say He feeds
My existence is His nourishment/and we assume His form
In Him and from Him, if you observe from a certain aspect/we seek refuge.[34]

(112) Because of this anxiety (*karb*), He sighed, and His breath was attributed to the Merciful, for He had mercy on that which the divine relations require, that is, bringing the forms of the cosmos into existence. These forms are both the manifest and the unmanifest aspects of the Real, because He is both the Manifest and the Unmanifest (the Hidden). He is the First, because He existed without the forms, and He is the Last, because He was the Essence of things when they came to be. The Last is the essence of the Manifest, and the Unmanifest is the essence of the First.[35] And "He knows all things absolutely" (Qur'ān 57:3), for He knows Himself. Since He brought the forms into existence in the Breath and the rule of the relations (between the Real and the cosmos), that is, the Names, was manifest, the divine relationship to the cosmos was established, and all things were attributed to Him. He (Muḥammad) said: "This day I lowered your pedigree and raised my pedigree";[36] that is, I took from you your attribution to yourselves and turned your attribution to Me.

Where are the God-fearing (*muttaqūn*), that is, those who took their God as protection (*wiqāya*)?[37] God was their manifest aspect, that is, the Essence of their manifest forms. The God-fearing person is the greatest, the most deserving (of this name), and the strongest in the eyes of all people. The God-fearing is the one who makes himself a protection for God through his form, because the Essence of the Real is the faculties of the servant. He made the one called the servant as a protection for the one called the Real on the basis of witness, so that the knower is distinguished from the ignorant. "Say, are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only the intelligent remember" (Qur'ān 39:9). The intelligent are those

34 Existence is compared here to nourishment which comes from God. With respect to the notion that God is the Essence of all things, when one asks for refuge in God, one is actually asking for refuge from Him.

35 In view of the cosmos He is the Manifest; however, without the cosmos, He is the Unmanifest.

36 I could not find the source of this statement.

37 *Muttaqūn* and *wiqāya* derive from the same root, *w.q.y*.

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who contemplate the core of the thing, which is what is sought (in order to know the thing). The negligent cannot overcome the diligent; likewise, the hireling cannot be compared with the servant. If the Real is a protection for the servant[38] from one aspect, and vice versa from another, then say of Being what you will: if you want, say it is the creation, and if you want, say it is the Real, and if you want, say it is the Real and the creation, and if you want, say there is neither real nor creation from every aspect, and if you want, you will hold perplexity in this matter. By establishing levels (of being), that which you seek becomes clear. If (the messengers) had not defined existence, they would not have conveyed the transformation of the Real into forms, nor would they have described Him as removing the forms from Himself.

(113) The eye looks only at Him/and one judges only Him
We (belong) to Him, (live) by Him and under His rule/and in every state we are in His presence

As a consequence, He is unknown and known, indescribable and describable. Whoever sees the Real from His standpoint (*minhu*), in Him (*fīhi*) and through Him (*bi-ʿaynihi*), is a knower (*ʿārif*). Whoever sees the Real from His standpoint, in Him, but through his own eyes, does not know.[39] And whoever does not see the Real from His standpoint, nor in Him, expecting to see Him through his own eyes, is ignorant. To sum up, each individual must have a belief (*iʿtiqād*) regarding his Lord through which he turns to Him and seeks Him. If the Real reveals Himself to him within this belief, he acknowledges Him. But if He reveals Himself in another belief, then he is denying Him, seeking refuge against Him, and behaving badly toward Him, while simultaneously thinking that he is behaving properly. Such a believer only believes in a god which he created in himself, for a god of beliefs is created (in thought). Such believers see only themselves and what they create in themselves.

Observe! The levels of people regarding the knowledge of God are the same levels concerning the seeing of God in the Resurrection. I have informed you of the reason which entails this. Beware of limiting yourself by a specific belief (*ʿaqd*)[40] and disbelieving in everything else lest you miss much good; moreover, you will miss knowing of things as they really are.[41] Be in yourself primal matter, receptive to all forms of belief, for God is too vast and great to be confined by one belief rather than another.[42] For this reason, He said: "Wherever you turn there is the face of God" (Qur'ān 2:115); He did not mention one place rather than another. He mentioned that there is the face of God, and the face of a thing is its essence (*ḥaqīqa*, or reality). By this He turned the attention of the gnostics' hearts lest events of this world should distract them from applying their minds to (God's

38 The text has *li-l-ḥaqq*, which is an error.
39 When the human being sees God with God's seeing, he is a gnostic. This idea is based on the tradition of the supererogatory works mentioned above. See p. 24 above.
40 Literally: knot.
41 The knowledge of things as they really are is the aim of the philosophers.
42 Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 176.

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omnipresence), for the servant does not know in which breath he will be taken (die); he may be taken at a time of inattentiveness, and thus will be unequal to the one taken at a time of attentiveness.

Also, the perfect servant (114), notwithstanding his knowledge (of God's omnipresence), must, from the standpoint of the external form and the limited state, turn his face in prayer toward the Holy Mosque and believe that God is there at prayer time. This is one of the levels (of the presence) of the Real's face, which derives from "Wherever you turn there is the face of God" (ibid.). The direction toward the Holy Mosque is part of (this verse), and in this direction God's face exists. However, do not say that He is only here, but adhere to the two notions you perceived, these being, embrace the rule of directing your face toward the Holy Mosque and abide by the rule of not limiting God's presence to specific buildings, which are only some of the many directions to which one can turn.

Through God it became clear to you that He is in every direction wherever one's belief is. Hence everyone is right (in his belief), and whoever is right is rewarded, and whoever receives reward is happy, and God is pleased with the happy individual, even if he is unhappy for some time in the world to come. For even the people of Providence[43] are sick and suffer pain in this world, although we know that they are the happy persons among the people of the Real. Among God's servants are those who will suffer pain in the next world in an abode called Hell (*jahannam*).[44] Despite this, none of the people of knowledge, those who were made to reveal things as they really are, will say with certainty that the happy persons will not enjoy a specific delight in this abode, either by freeing them from pains, and thus their delight will be relief from pain, or they will enjoy a separate[45] and additional delight as the delight of the people of Paradise in Paradise. And God knows best.

43 That is, those whom God takes care of.

44 I cannot be sure of what or who Ibn al-ʿArabī is hinting at by telling us that some of God's servants will suffer in the world to come. Is he saying pain will follow them for their sins?

45 This is a delight which is not connected to the relief of pain.

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11 The bezel of the wisdom of opening[1] exists in the essence of Ṣāliḥ

(115) Among His signs are the (riders) on mounts/because of the variety of paths
Some adhere to the true course/and others travel (as in) the desert without aim
The former are eyewitnesses/while the latter go astray
Both receive from God/revelations of mysteries from every side[2]

Know, may God grant you success, that in their essences all things are built on unevenness, which begins with number three and beyond that.[3] The first uneven number is three. From the divine presence the cosmos came into existence. Therefore, God said: "When We will a thing (to be), We only say to it 'be' and it comes into being" (Qurʾān 16:40). This is an essence, which possesses will and speech. If this essence and its will, which constitutes a specific turning toward a thing aiming at making it exist, and the saying "be" in this process did not exist, the thing would not exist. Also the tripartite unevenness appears in this thing. With respect to the thing itself, its existence and description as an existent are valid because of three (elements): its quality of being a thing (*shayʾiyya*), its (quality of) hearing (*samāʿ*), and its (quality of) obedience to the originator's command. Compare the first three with the last three: The fixed entity of the thing in its state of absence corresponds to the Essence of its bringer into existence; the hearing of this entity, to the will of its originator; and, its obedience to the command of its originator, to the latter's saying "be," and so brings it into existence. Bringing into being is ascribed to the thing, for if it had no power of bringing into being, when hearing this saying, it would not come into being. On hearing the command, only the essence of the thing brings it into existence, after its non-existence. Thus, the Real affirms that (116) bringing into being pertains to the thing itself and not to the Real, while the Real in this (process) only commands.[4] He so informs about

1 Opening is equivalent to unveiling or to all kinds of God's self-manifestation. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 21f; SPK, pp. 222–224.

2 The riders here are individuals who travel in the ways of life. Some of them know their way and others go astray. Both groups receive signs from God, which can teach them about Him and the cosmos.

3 "One" is not considered a number; hence, the first uneven number is three.

4 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the thing exists in the state of a fixed entity, which can be embodied and becomes a concrete object at God's command. In fact, Ibn al-ʿArabī interprets this verse in a plain manner, because the Qurʾān speaks of a thing's existence

Himself in his saying: "When We will a thing (to be), We only say to it 'be' and it comes into being" (ibid.). He (the Real) attributes the bringing into being to the thing itself as a result of God's command, and He speaks the truth. In principle, it is reasonable, just as the one feared and obeyed orders his servant to stand, and he stands in submission to his master's command. The master only orders the servant to stand; however, standing is the outcome of the servant's activity, and not the master's.[5] Thus, bringing into being rests on the tripartite principle – three elements from both sides, from the Real and from creation.

Also, the tripartite principle permeates the origination of notions by way of logical proofs. A proof should be composed of three (parts) in accordance with a specific order and condition(s). Only in this way is a result reached. The contemplator (*nāẓir*) composes his proof of two premises, each containing two parts,[6] so that there are four parts. One of these four parts is repeated in the two premises so as to link the first premise to the second, like in a marriage;[7] hence, there are three (different) parts, because of the repetition of one part.

When this procedure takes place in accordance with the specific aspect, that is, the connection of the first premise with the second through the repetition of one part, thus validating the tripartite structure, one arrives at the conclusion (literally: what one seeks, *al-maṭlūb*). (As a) specific condition, the predicate of the first premise must be more general than its subject or equal to it.[8] In this case the conclusion will be valid, otherwise it is invalid. Such faulty procedure can be found in the world. For example, the ascription of one's acts to oneself without connecting them to God, or attributing the bringing into being, of which we speak, to God alone, while the Real attributes it only to the thing to which God says "be."

For example, if we wish to prove that the existence of the world is caused, we shall say everything that comes into being (*ḥādith*) has a cause (*sabab*), thus we have the thing that comes into being and the cause.[9] Then we say (117) in the second premise: the world comes into being, so "comes into being" is repeated in both premises. The conclusion is that the world has a cause. The cause, which

before its concrete existence; the command is turned to a thing, which means that it has some kind of existence. This plain meaning supports Ibn al-ʿArabī's theory of the fixed entities.

5 This is not a very accurate example, because the servant exists concretely, while things only exist in the Real's thought as fixed entities. However, it does bear witness to the aspect of the obedience to the command which inheres in the servant.

6 For example, the two parts are the subject and predicate.

7 Probably in this context he means the connection between male and female, who have something in common.

8 I follow here the examples given in Affifi's commentary (p. 136): 1. Every animal is a body; 2. The human being is an animal; 3. Therefore, the human being is a body. In this example the predicate (body) is more general than its subject (every animal), because a body may also refer to inanimate things. In the second example the predicate is equal to the subject: 1. Every animal is sensitive; 2. The human being is an animal; 3. Therefore, the human being is sensitive.

9 This is the first premise in which "everything that comes into being" is the subject and "cause" is the predicate.

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appears in the first premise, is reiterated in the conclusion. The specific aspect is the repetition of "comes into being," while the specific condition is the generality of the predicate, for it makes that which comes into being exist.[10] Regarding the coming of the world into being from God, the predicate is general. We affirm that everything that comes into being (subject) has a cause (predicate), whether this cause is equal to or more general than its subject. In both cases the conclusion is valid. Thus, also in the origination of ideas through proofs the tripartite principle is manifest.

Hence, the foundation of Being is tripartite in principle. For this reason, God manifested the wisdom of Ṣāliḥ in postponing the punishment of his people for three days as a true threat,[11] which finally became real, and this is the cry by which God destroyed them, "so that they fell down in their homes" (Qurʾān 7:78, 11:67). On the first of the three days their faces became yellow, on the second red, and on the third black.[12] When the third day passed, their predisposition was appropriate, and then decay appeared in them, and this appearance was called destruction. The yellowing of the faces of the miserable parallels the shining of the faces of the happy, as in his saying "On that Day some faces will be shining (*musfira*)" (Qurʾān 80:38). (The word *musfira*) originates in *sufūr*, meaning manifestation (*ẓuhūr*). (This sign) corresponds to the yellowing of the faces of the people of Ṣāliḥ on the first day in which the sign of their misery appeared. Likewise, in parallel to the redness that appeared in their faces, God said of the happy "laughing" (ibid., 39), for laughter causes redness of the face, and for the happy it is the redness of the cheeks. And finally, as a counterpart to the transformation of the skins of the miserable to black, God said "rejoicing" (ibid., *mustabshira*), meaning the impact (118) of joyfulness on their skins as blackness had impact on the skins of the miserable. For this reason, He applied the word "tidings" (*bushrā*) to both parties; that is, what He said to them affected their skin (*bashara*),[13] and His words caused their skin to color in a way which described their faces differently than before. Regarding the happy, He said: "Their Lord gives them glad tidings of His mercy and pleasure" (Qurʾān 9:21), while regarding the miserable, He said: "Give them tidings of a painful punishment" (Qurʾān 3:21). The two kinds of announcements influenced the souls of both groups and in turn the color of their skins.

That which was manifest in their outward appearance derived from the notion already established in their souls. Nothing affected them but themselves, just as their origination derived from themselves. "God possesses the conclusive argument" (Qurʾān 6:149).

Whoever understands this wisdom, establishing it in his soul as witness, releases himself from dependence on others and knows that the good and evil that

10 Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the term *ʿilla* in two meanings: a predicate and a cause.
11 Qurʾān 11:65,
12 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, Beirut 1970, Vol. III, p. 192 (Qurʾān 7:73–78).
13 *Bushrā* and *bashara* have the same root, *b.sh.r*.

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befall him come only from himself.[14] By good I mean what fits his aims and tallies with his nature and temperament, and by evil I mean the opposite. Whoever witnesses this (wisdom) ascribes all excuses to the existents themselves, even if they make no excuse, knowing that all that befalls one derives from oneself, for as we have mentioned before, knowledge follows the known object. Thus, he says to himself when something that does not fit his aim befalls him: "Your hands did it and your mouth breathed." And God speaks the truth and guides (people) to the (right) way (Qurʾān 33:4).

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14 Ibn al-ʿArabī ignores the self-contradiction in his thought, because in the last analysis God alone establishes the fixed entities that determine the physical and the spiritual constitution of the human being. Thus, actually the human being is not responsible for what suits his constitution, because the latter was already established by God.

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12 The bezel of the wisdom of the heart[1] exists in the essence of Shuʿayb

(119) Know that the heart – I mean the heart of the knower of God (the gnostic – *ʿārif*) – derives from God's Mercy, but is more encompassing (*awsaʾ*) than Mercy, because the heart encompasses the Real, while His Mercy does not.[2] Most scholars[3] hold this notion, pointing out that the Real has mercy on (people), but is not the object of mercy.

As for the elite, they point out that God describes Himself as breath (*nafas*), a word derived from exhalation (*tanfīs*). (Also they state) that the divine names are identical to the entity named, that is, God. These names require the realities they bestow, and the realities which they require are none but the cosmos. Divinity (*ulūhiyya*) requires worshipers, while Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) requires servanthood, because the essence of both Divinity and Lordship depends on worshipers and servanthood for its concrete and assumed existence. However, the Real with respect to His Essence (*dhāt*) needs nothing, (whereas in contrast) to Lordship this notion (the Essence) does not apply. Thus, the matter remains (as something) between what Lordship requires and what the Essence deserves, that is, its dispensing with the cosmos.

Truly, Lordship is identical with the Essence. However, because things contradict each other by virtue of their relationships, the Real describes Himself in a tradition as the one who has mercy on His servants. The first breath which came forth from Lordship is related to (the name) the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), which brought the cosmos into existence, the cosmos that Lordship in its reality and all the divine names require. Regarding this aspect, it is proved that His Mercy encompasses

1 Shuʿayb means "branching out," and this meaning is connected to the human heart. First, the human heart's many functions affect every part of the body, and second, the heart is capable of changing and adopting various ideas. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 23. Idem, "Ibn ʿArabī's Summary," p. 25f. By the human heart, Ibn al-ʿArabī does not mean a bodily organ, but rather a spiritual organ possessing mystical awareness. Izutsu, *Creation*, p. 161.

2 The Real (*al-ḥaqq*) denotes God in respect to His names and attributes, therefore His Mercy pertains to the Real. From the standpoint of the Essence, His Mercy does not encompass the Real. See below, n. 4.

3 See Kāshānī, p. 300.

everything, including the Real,[4] and His Mercy is broader than the heart or similar to it in broadness. (Here) the discussion of mercy and the heart finishes.

Also, you should know, as (120) stated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*,[5] the Real changes His forms when He reveals Himself. Also, when the heart encompasses Him, it does not encompass anything else with Him, and it is as if the Real filled the heart. This means that when the heart looks at the Real when the latter reveals Himself to it, it cannot look at other things. The gnostic's heart is related to broadness, as Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī said: "Were the Throne and that which it contains multiplied one hundred million times and placed in the corner of the gnostic's heart, he would not feel it."[6] Likewise al-Junayd said: "When the coming into being is linked to the eternal, no sign of it will remain."[7] How can a heart which contains the Eternal feel the existence of the coming into being?[8] If the forms of the Real's self-manifestation are diversified, the heart necessarily becomes wide or narrow in keeping with the form of the divine self-manifestation, for the heart can contain only the form in which the self-manifestation takes place. That is because the heart relates to the gnostic or the perfect human being as the bezel of the ring relates to the seal (the stone); the seal does not exceed the bezel, but it fits its measure and form, be it circular, square, hexagonal, octagonal, or any other form. This runs contrary to what the Sufis (*al-ṭāʾifa*) said, viz., that the Real manifests Himself according to the measure of the servant's predisposition. This is not true, for the servant manifests himself to the Real in accordance with the form the Real manifests Himself to the servant. To explain this issue, God has two ways of self-manifestation: concealed (*ghayb*) and unconcealed (*shahāda*). The concealed self-manifestation bestows the heart with predisposition. This is the essential self-manifestation whose essence is concealed; it is the ipseity which the Real deserves saying of Himself, "He" (*huwa*). The term "He" belongs to Him always and forever.

When the heart possesses this predisposition, the unconcealed self-manifestation appears (121) in the sensible world and the heart sees the Real in the form mentioned above. The Real bestows on the heart its predisposition, as said: "(Our Lord) bestowed on everything (the form of) its creation" (Qurʾān 20:50). Then He removed the veil between Him and His servant, and he saw Him in the form of his belief, which is the essence of his belief. Both the heart and the eye always witness only the form of belief vis-à-vis the Real. Thus, the heart contains the Real of the belief, and the Real manifests Himself to the heart and hence the heart knows Him. The eye sees only the Real of the belief. Quite evidently there are various

4 From the standpoint of the divine names, the Real too is given mercy by the essential mercy. Kāshānī, p. 302.

5 The collection of traditions by al-Bukhārī or Muslim.

6 *Futūḥāt*, Vol. III, pp. 540 (with a slight difference). Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 46f. Very probably the Greatest Master speaks of the Perfect Human Being who encompasses the Real's attributes and hence everything. Izutsu, *Creation*, pp. 162f. See p. 57 above

7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb al-bāʾ*, in *Majmūʿa*, Vol. I, p. 463; idem, *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, p. 90, n. 19; idem, *al-Tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya*, p. 114, line 3.

8 Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 82f.

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beliefs that whosoever restricts Him to his belief denies Him in other beliefs, affirming His self-manifestation in the belief to which he restricts Him.[9] Whoever considers the Real without restriction does not deny Him, affirming Him in every form He manifests Himself and devoting himself to the endless forms in which He is manifest, for the forms of His self-manifestation have no end.

The same applies to the knowledge of God; no limit stops the knower at a certain point (in this knowledge), but (on the contrary), he is always a knower seeking to increase the knowledge of Him. "O my Lord, increase my knowledge" (Qurʾān 20:114); the matter has no end, from both sides.[10]

This is so when you say the Real and creation. However, if you consider His saying "I am his foot with which he walks, his hand with which he seizes and his tongue with which he speaks," and other faculties and substrates, that is, the organs, in which they are located, you will not separate (the Real from creation) and you will say all things are the Real or creation. But, this is creation from one standpoint and the Real from another, yet the Essence is one. The form of self-manifestation is identical to the form of the one who receives this self-manifestation; hence, one is at the same time that which is manifested and that for which manifestation is performed. Look how wonderful is God regarding His ipseity and His relationship with the cosmos within the realities of His most beautiful names.

(122) Who is there and what is there/the "who" and the "what" are the same

Whoever generalizes Him, particularizes Him/and whoever particularizes Him, generalizes Him

There is no essence but His/the light of His Essence is darkness

Whoever disregards this/will suffer anxiety

Only a servant who is anxious/knows what we said

"Surely in that there is a reminder for whoever has a heart (*qalb*)" (Qurʾān 50:37), because he changes (*taqallubihi*)[11] himself by way of various forms and attributes. God did not say "for whoever has an intellect," because the intellect (*ʿaql*) means a limit and it restricts the matter to a single trait, and the reality denies restriction in the cosmos. It is not a reminder to those who possess intellect, that is, the people of beliefs (*aṣḥāb al-iʿtiqādāt*) who accuse each other of unbelief and curse each other and "no one helps them" (Qurʾān 3:22, 91). That is because the god of one believer has no authority over the god of another believer. One who adheres to a belief defends his belief, that is, what he believes regarding his god, and another believer will not help him, and for this reason he has no impact on his rival. Likewise, the rival receives no help from the god of his belief (because)

9 Takeshita, p. 117.

10 The matter has no end because the self-manifestations of the Real are endless; hence, seeking knowledge of them has no end. Sells ("Garden," p. 300) points out the double function of this verse in this context: a. true knowledge always changes and increases; and b. the repetition of the words "increase my knowledge" may release the Sufi from being bound by his intellect.

11 The noun *qalb* and the verb *taqallaba* derive from the root q.l.b, which connotes change and transformation. SPK, p. 106. Izutsu, Creation, pp. 163f.

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"no one helps them" (ibid.). The Real denies the gods of beliefs the ability to help each believer separately; those who are helped are all the people, who are also the helpers.

In the eyes of the knower (or gnostic – *ʿārif*), the Real is the known (al-*maʿrūf*) which is never denied. The people of the known (*ahl al-maʿrūf*)[12] in this world are the people of the known in the next world. For this reason, God says "for whoever has a heart" (Qurʾān 50:37), because he knows the change of the Real in forms by his own change in shapes.[13] Through his self, he knows God's self, and his self is not different from the Real's ipseity. No thing of the Being, at present or in the future, is other than the Real's ipseity, but it is the essence of His ipseity. (One who knows the Real through his self) is the knower (123), who cognizes and affirms this form; however, this one is neither the knower nor the one who cognizes; he is denied in this different form.[14] This is the portion of whoever knows the Real through His self-manifestation and in witnessing the very combination (of all things), and (this is proved) through His words "for whoever has a heart" (Qurʾān, ibid.) (meaning that the Real has) different forms when He changes (things).

As for the people of belief, they are those who blindly followed (*qalladū*) the reports of the prophets and the messengers regarding the Real. They are not those who blindly follow the people of contemplation (*aṣḥāb al-afkār*) who interpret the reports (using rational) proofs. By those who blindly follow the messengers, God means (those who) "listen attentively" (Qurʾān, ibid.), because the divine reports were given by the prophets. "Whoever listens attentively" means a witness who calls attention to the presence of imagination and its use. Concerning good deeds (*iḥsān*), the Prophet said: "You should worship God as if you see Him,"[15] and God is present in the direction of the one who prays, therefore the latter is a witness. One who blindly follows a man of contemplation and is limited by him is not the same as one who listens attentively, for the latter should be a witness of what we have mentioned. When he is not a witness of what we have mentioned, he is not the one meant in this verse. Those are the people about whom God said: "When those who have been followed disown their followers" (Qurʾān 2:166, trans. AH). However, the messengers did not disown their followers. Hence, O my friend (*yā waliyya*),[16] verify what I have introduced to you in this wisdom of the heart.

As for the ascription of this wisdom to Shuʿayb, it is because this name contains the (notion) of branching off (*tashaʿʿub*), meaning that its (wisdom's) branches are not limited, for each belief is a branch of wisdom, and wisdom is the totality of

12 It seems that this term is equivalent to *ahl allāh*, the people of God, who are the best mystics.

13 Izutsu, *Creation*, p. 165.

14 Because the forms are always changing, one cannot ascribe to the knower residence in one station (*maqām*), and not in another. Hence, the true knower is in a station of no station (*maqām lā maqām*). SPK, p. 376.

15 Bukhārī, II: 37 (50).

16 According to one of the manuscripts (Affifi, p. 123, n. 6), the letters *y.a.w.l.y* can be corrected to create the word *taʾwīl*.

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all its branches, that is, the beliefs. When the veil is disclosed,[17] (this wisdom) will be manifested to everyone according to his belief. It might be manifested contrary to one's belief regarding God's judgment. (This is proved by the following) verse: "(On the Day of Resurrection) God will show them what they did not take into consideration" (Qurʾān 39:47). Most cases (of not taking into consideration) pertain to God's judgment. For example, the Muʿtazilite holds that God will implement His threat on the transgressor (*al-ʿāṣī*) if he dies without repentance.[18] When he dies (124) and God has mercy on him, (it becomes evident) that God's providence has already established that the sinner will not be punished. (Thus), the Muʿtazilite found God to be Forgiving and Merciful, and so God showed him that which he did not take into consideration.

As for God's ipseity, some people are absolutely certain that God is such and such; however, when the veil is disclosed, they see that the form of their belief is true and they believe in it. (In such a case) the knot (*ʿuqda* of belief) is untied, and beliefs disappear and turn into knowledge which derives from revelation (*mushāhada*).[19] After one's sight is sharpened, its weakness does not recur. As a result, God appears in the sight of some servants in various forms of self-manifestation contrary to their beliefs, because His self-manifestations do not repeat themselves. They regard the appearance of His ipseity as true, (because) "God will show them what they did not take into consideration" (Qurʾān, ibid.) before the removal of the veil.

We have mentioned the form of ascension after death (in the gradations) of the divine knowledge in our *Book of Revelations* (*Kitāb al-tajalliyāt*),[20] wherein we noted the Sufis we met in visions and the things they did not know of which we informed them regarding this issue.[21] One of the marvelous things concerning the ascension is that the Sufi is always ascending without being aware of his ascension, because of the subtlety and thinness of the veil and the likeness of the forms, as God said: "They were supplied with something like it" (Qurʾān 2:25, following AH).

One form is not the same as another, for the knower is aware of the fact that they (the forms) are similar, (not identical), to each other, (and hence) different (from each other). He who verifies (*ṣāḥib al-taḥqīq* the divine realities) sees multiplicity in the One, just as he knows that the divine names, although their realities are many and different, apply to only one essence. With respect to reason, there is multiplicity; however, it applies to one essence. Thus, in self-manifestation, multiplicity is witnessed in one essence, just as Prime Matter (*hayūlā*) exists[22] in everything, and Prime Matter, though having many and various forms, (125) is actually reduced to a single substance (*jawhar*).

17 In the world to come, one will be able to see the truth.
18 Abrahamov, *Al-Ḳāsim ibn Ibrāhīm*, pp. 48f, n. 290.
19 Literally: seeing.
20 In *Rasāʾil ibn al-ʿarabī*, Haydarabad 1942, no. 23.
21 See, for example, Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, p. 61.
22 Or Prime Matter "is found" (read *tūjadu* [Affifi, I, p. 124, n. 6] instead of *tūʾkhadhu* of the text).

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Thus, whoever knows himself (or his soul) through this knowledge knows his Lord, because He created him in His image;[23] moreover, he is the very ipseity and reality of God. For this reason, none of the scholars have arrived at the knowledge of the self (soul) and its reality except for the metaphysicians among the messengers and the Sufis.

As for the people of contemplation and discursive thinking among the ancients and the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*), in their discussion of the self (soul) and its essence, none of them have achieved its reality; discursive discussion never provides this knowledge. Whoever seeks knowledge of the self (soul) through discursive discussion overvalues this device and uses it not in its proper place.[24] Undoubtedly, they are among "those whose efforts were in vain in this world, while they thought that they were doing well" (Qurʾān 18:104). Whoever seeks this knowledge through an improper way will not arrive at its reality.

How beautiful is God's saying regarding the cosmos and its (perpetual) changes, because of His breaths "in a new creation" (Qurʾān 50:15), in a single essence. He said (this) about a single group, nay, about most people: "No, they doubt a new creation" (ibid.).[25] They do not know of the renewal of the cosmos's creation due to God's breaths. However, the Ashʿarites arrived at the notion of the perpetual creation of some existents, that is, the accidents (*aʿrāḍ*), and the Sophists (*al-ḥisbāniyya*)[26] thought that the whole cosmos is created perpetually. All the people of contemplation regarded them as ignorant.

However, both groups erred. In spite of the Sophists' belief that the whole cosmos is always changing, their error lies in not ascribing these changes to a single essence which brings the cosmos into existence and in not making the cosmos intelligible through God. Had they held this notion, they would have attained the rank of realization of the truth. As for the Ashʿarites, they did not know that the whole cosmos is an aggregation of accidents and that it is changing all the time, for accidents do not endure two instants.[27] This appears in (their) definition of things, for when they define a thing it becomes manifest that it has accidents,[28]

23 See p. 37, n. 4 above; Sell, *Mystical Languages*, p. 245, n. 9; Masataka Takeshita, "The *Homo Imago Dei* Motif and the Anthropocentric Metaphysics of Ibn ʿArabī in *Inshāʾ al-Dawāʾir*, *Orient* 18(1982):111–128.

24 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī uses an idiom which reads: "whoever regards the swollen as fat and exhales toward a thing which is not kindled" (*istasmana dhā waram*, *wa-nafakha fī ghayr ḍaram*) (in order to intensify the fire), which means he makes an error in judgment and uses an improper device.

25 T. Izutsu, "The Concept of Perpetual Creation in Islamic Mysticism and Zen Buddhism," in Izutsu, *Creation*, pp. 141–173.

26 Kāshānī, p. 316. The Sophists were so called because *ḥisbān* means conjecture. J. van Ess, "Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought," *Al-Abhath* 21 (1968), p. 1.

27 Contrary to the Ashʿarites, who believed that only the accidents are always changing (al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-tamhīd*, pp. 15–21), Ibn al-ʿArabī held that the whole cosmos is always in a state of fluctuation, not only the accidents, but also the atoms.

28 In the Ashʿarite view, everything is composed of atoms (*jawhar*, pl. *jawāhir*) and accidents. The atoms are indivisible particles which do not differ from each other; they

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(126) and that these accidents, which are mentioned in the definition, serve as the essence of the atom and its reality. Every atom exists by virtue of itself (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*). From the standpoint of its being an accident, a thing does not exist by virtue of itself. From the aggregation of that which does not exist by virtue of itself (accidents) comes that which does exist by virtue of itself.[29] For example, the atom, which exists by virtue of its essence, is defined as having the property of occupying one place (*taḥayyuz*)[30] and as having the property of being a substrate for accidents, (and these two properties are) essential to its definition. No doubt, receivability (*qabūl*) is an accident, because it exists only in a recipient (*qābil*), for it does not exist by virtue of itself, and this property is an essential (element) of the atom. (Likewise) occupying one place is an accident that exists only in some place, hence it does not exist by virtue of itself. Occupying one place and receivability are not something added to the essence of the defined atom, for essential definitions are the essence of the defined thing and its ipseity. Thus, that which does not remain for two instants becomes that which does remain for two instants and more, and that which does not exist by virtue of itself comes to be that which does exist by virtue of itself. They (the Ashʿarites) were not aware of their state, (for) they "doubt a new creation" (Qurʾān, ibid.).[31]

As for the people of unveiling, they believe that God reveals Himself in every breath and never repeats his self-manifestation. They (also) believe from witnessing that every self-manifestation bestows a new creation and removes a preceding creation. Its removal is the essence of annihilation (*fanāʾ*) in the passing self-manifestation and subsistence (*baqāʾ*) in the bestowal of the following self-manifestation. So understand!

are the stable element of everything, while the accidents are the changing elements of all bodies, such as color, states of aggregation, heat or coldness, etc. See the preceding reference. For atomism in the Kalām, see Pines, *Atomism*, pp. 1–41.

29 The combination (*ijtimāʿ*) of accidents is itself an accident. Thus, that which does not exist by virtue of itself causes the existence of that which exists by virtue of itself.

30 Pines, *Atomism*, p. 12.

31 Because the atom possesses the properties of an accident, it is really an accident which always changes. Thus, the whole cosmos changes, not only the accidents. Cf. Izutsu, *Creation*, pp. 168–171. Here Iztusu misses the core of Ibn al-ʿArabī's speculative argumentation, omitting the discussion of the atoms' traits and speaking instead of substances.

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13 The bezel of the wisdom of spiritual power[1] exists in the essence of Lot

(126) *Al-malk* means power (*shidda*) and *al-malīk* is the powerful (*shadīd*). When you powerfully knead a lump of dough (*shaddadta al-ʿajīn*), you say *malaktu al-ajīn*. (The poet) Qays ibn al-Ḥaṭīm[2] says, describing a stab:

I seized (so) powerfully the place of the wound by the palm of my hand and widened (*anhartu*) it/so that one standing in front of the wound could see that which is behind (the wounded),

(127) meaning I seized so powerfully (the place) of the stab. This is what God said about Lot: (Lot said) "If only I had the power to stop you or sought shelter in a strong support" (*rukn shadīd*) (Qurʾān 11:80, trans. AH). God's messenger said: "May God have mercy upon my brother, (because) he sought shelter in a strong support."[3] The Prophet called (our) attention to the fact that Lot was with God, because God is Powerful. By "a strong support" Lot means (his) tribe, and by "if only I had the power" he means will (or aspiration, *himma*) which pertains especially to humans. God's messenger said "since that time," meaning from that time when Lot said "or sought shelter in a strong support," God sent a prophet only when he was protected by his tribe. This was the case of Abū Ṭālib (who sheltered) God's messenger (Muḥammad). Lot said, "If only I had the power," because he heard God saying, "It is God who created you of weakness" (Qurʾān 30:54), as an essential trait, "then, after weakness, he gave them strength" (ibid.). The strength occurred (*ʿaraḍat*) through giving, hence it is an accidental strength (*quwwa ʿaraḍiyya*), "then after strength He gave weakness and white hair" (ibid.). God's giving is associated with white hair, while weakness means returning to the fundamental trait of his creation which is expressed in His words, "created you of weakness" (ibid.). Thus, He returned humans to the first state of their creation, as He said: "then…God will return (some of you) to the most despicable state of life, so that after having knowledge they will know nothing" (Qurʾān 16:70). He pointed out that humans are brought back to the state of the first weakness; hence, as regards weakness, an old man is like a child.

1 *Ḥikma Malkiyya*. Lot could not overcome his corrupted people, because he was weak, hence he turned to God seeking His help against them. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 23.

2 A very important poet of Yathrib (al-Madīna). See on him E I2.

3 Bukhārī, LX:11 (3372).

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No prophet has been sent before he has reached the age of forty, at which time one begins to decline and weaken. For this reason, Lot said: "If only I had the power," (meaning that this situation) requires effective will. If you ask: "What prevents him from having an effective will, which exists in the followers who travel on the way and the messengers are most worthy of it?" We shall answer: "You are right, but you lack another knowledge, because knowledge does not leave to the will (128) the power to act freely (*taṣarruf*)." Whenever knowledge increases, the power to act freely decreases, because of the will.

Two aspects explain this: The first is one's firm awareness of the station of servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*) and his consideration of the root of his natural creation, and the second is the unity of the one who acts freely and the one freely acted upon. He (the prophet) did not know to whom he should direct his will, and this prevented him from exercising it. In this state (*mashhad*), he saw that his opponent did not deviate from his reality and the state of his fixed entity and absence. That which appears in existence was only that which exists as an absent fixed entity. (His opponent) neither exceeded his reality nor infringed on his way. Designating this way, "opposition" is only accidental matter, which the veil over human eyes makes appear, as God said about them: "…but most of them do not know.[4] They know the manifest side of life in this world, but are heedless of the next" (Qurʾān 30:6–7). This emerges from the word hearts (*qulūb*)[5] in their saying, "Our hearts are covered" (Qurʾān 2:88), meaning (our hearts) are in wrapping, that is, cover which prevents (literally: conceals) them from perceiving things as they really are. This and similar (situations) hinder the knower from acting freely.

Shaykh Abū ʿAbdallah ibn Qāʾid asked Shaykh Abū al-Suʿūd ibn al-Shibl:[6] "Why do you not act freely?" Abū al-Suʿūd answered: "I leave God to act freely for me as He wills." By this he means what God said commanding Muḥammad: "Make Him your agent (*wakīl*)" (Qurʾān 73:9). The agent is the one who acts freely. Moreover, Muḥammad heard God saying: "Spend from what We gave you as substitutes" (Qurʾān 57:7). Abū al-Suʿūd and the gnostics knew that that which was in his hand did not belong to him and that he is just a substitute. Then the Real actually said to him: "Make Me an agent of the matter over which I made you a substitute and granted you mastery." Abū al-Suʿūd obeyed God and made Him an agent. How (129) can a will, by which one acts freely, remain for the one who witnesses this matter, while the will acts only through the combination of all one's powers (*jamʿiyya*),[7] and no room is left for anything else? The knowledge (of this matter) makes him aloof from this *jamʿiyya*. Thus, the knower whose knowledge is perfect appears as totally incapable and weak.

4 The beginning of the verse reads: "It is God's promise. God does not break His promise." Thus, the ignorance of people refers to God's promise; however, Ibn al-ʿArabi transfers, as he often does, the subject matter so that it fits his aim.

5 Read *qulūb* instead of *maqlūb*, which has no meaning here.

6 Ibn al-Shibl was ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī's (d. 1166) famous disciple. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 152–155.

7 SPK, pp. 135, 239.

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One of the Substitutes (*abdāl*)[8] said to Shaykh ʿAbd al-Razzāq:[9] "After greeting Abū Madyan ask him why nothing is difficult for us, while things are difficult for you, notwithstanding, we desire your station and you do not desire ours?" This was the situation of Abū Madyan, who had attained this station and others, whereas we are more complete in weakness and incapability than him. Nevertheless, this Substitute said to him what he said. This story refers to the same matter (with which we are dealing).

Regarding this station, Muḥammad said about God's order to him to (act): "I do not know what will be done with me or you; I follow only what is revealed to me" (Qurʾān 46:9, trans. AH). The Messenger should act according to what is revealed to him; he has nothing else. If it was revealed to him with certainty to act, he acted, and if he was prevented from acting, he abstained from acting. If he was given the choice (to act or not), he chose not to act, unless his knowledge was defective (and he chose to act). Abū al-Suʿūd said to those who believed in him: "Fifteen years ago, God gave me (the ability) to act freely, but I did not act, because of a display of affectedness." This is arrogance (*idlāl*). As for ourselves, we did not act not because of a display of affectedness, which means to prefer acting, but because of perfect knowledge, for knowledge does not require an act through choice. When the knower acts freely in the world by his will, his act derives from a divine command and compulsion, not from choice. No doubt, the position of the prophetic mission (*risāla*) requires (the ability of the prophet) to act freely so that his mission will be accepted and that what appears in him will affirm his mission in the eyes of his community and his people in order that God's religion will be made manifest. The case of the saint (*walī*) is different. Notwithstanding, the messenger does not require (the ability to act freely) manifestly, because the messenger (130) has compassion for his people and he does not want to exaggerate in manifesting the (divine) argument against them,[10] for (the appearance of this argument) might cause their destruction, and he wants their subsistence.

The messenger also knew that if a miracle (*al-amr al-muʿjiz)*[11] appears to the community, some will believe when seeing the miracle; others, aware of its veracity, will nevertheless deny it in disbelief out of evilness, arrogance and envy; and still others ascribe it to magic and delusion.[12] Since the messengers perceived

8 A substitute is a saint who replaces the Pole (*qutb*) when the latter leaves a certain place. God preserves the seven climes through the seven substitutes. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, ch. 7.

9 One of Abū Madyan's (d. 1198) disciples. *Sufis of Andalusia*, p. 101.

10 Qurʾān 6:149. The Qurʾān tells us in several places that disputations took place between God and certain peoples. In these disputations the conclusive argument belonged to God.

11 A miracle in Arabic is called *muʿjiza*, from the verb *aʿjaza*, meaning he caused someone to be unable to imitate the occurrence of the miraculous event. Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 170.

12 For such accusations in Islamic literature, see Abrahamov, "The Barāhima's Enigma – A Search for a New Solution," *Die Welt des Orients* 18 (1987), p. 83. Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam – Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and Their Impact on Islamic Thought*, Leiden 1999, pp. 83–86.

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that the believers are only those in whose hearts God aroused the light of belief, and that when a person does not contemplate through this light called belief, a miracle is of no benefit to him, they refused to require miracles, because their effect neither embraces these (people) who see them nor does it enter their hearts. Regarding the most perfect of all messengers and the wisest and most righteous of all creatures, God said: "You will not guide whom you want to guide, but God will guide whom He wants" (Qurʾān 28:56).

If the will (*himma*) necessarily[13] had affected (its object), then none would have been more perfect, elevated and stronger than God's Messenger regarding this power. In fact, the Messenger's will did not influence his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, to become a Muslim and the above-mentioned verse was sent down regarding him. For this reason, God said referring to Muḥammad that he should only convey (the divine message to the people): "It is not incumbent on you to guide them, but God will guide whom He wants" (Qurʾān 2:272). And He adds in *sūrat al-qaṣaṣ* (28): "And He knows best those who are rightly guided" (Qurʾān 28:56). By "by those who are rightly guided," He means those who made Him know their being guided in the state of their absence through their fixed entities.[14] God affirmed that knowledge follows the thing known (*al-maʿlūm*). Whoever is a believer in his state of being a fixed entity and in his state of absence appears as a believer in the state of his concrete existence. God knows the future position of the believer, and for this reason He said: "And He knows best those who are rightly guided" (ibid.). Since He said this, He also said: "My statement cannot be changed" (Qurʾān 50:29), because My statement follows exactly My knowledge of My creatures – "And I do not wrong My servants" (ibid.), meaning I do not predetermine their unbelief, thus making them unhappy, then require them to do what they are incapable of doing. But I do treat them only in keeping with Our knowledge of them, and We know them only through what they give us, that is, their exact essence. If there is any wrongness, (it derives from them) and they are the wrongdoers. For this reason, God said: "But (131) they wronged themselves" (Qurʾān 2:57). Hence, God did not wrong them. In like manner, We said to them only what Our essence gave Us to say to them. And Our essence is too known to Us in its exact state to say this and not that. We say only what We know to say. We have the privilege to say, and they have the privilege to obey or not upon hearing (Our words).[15]

13 The author means without the intervention of God.

14 Does God not know the way of guidance without the fixed entities? Such a formulation of his thought makes Ibn al-ʿArabī believe in the independence of the fixed entities, as if they were produced without God's power. This notion is mentioned in the end of ch. 5 (p. 83 of the Arabic text). However, Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to state there and here that God's will is established in accordance with the fixed entities, which were already produced in God's thought.

15 Strangely enough, Ibn al-ʿArabī gives the human the choice to act or not, and this capacity to choose contradicts what he said previously about the decree of the fixed entities. Also, the Greatest Master contradicts himself when saying that he knows how God's essence acts, whereas he states many times that God's essence cannot be known.

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Everything is from Us and from them/learning of this is from Us and from them

If they are not from Us/We no doubt are from them

So realize, O my friend, this wisdom of spiritual power that exists in the essence of Lot, for it is the core of knowledge.

The mystery is now manifest to you/and the matter is evident

That which is called uneven/is included in the even[16]

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16 In this image, Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to say that just as the uneven is included in the even, so vice versa, meaning just as God is within us, we are within God.

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14 The bezel of the wisdom of predetermination[1] exists in the essence of Ezra

(131) Know that the decree (*qaḍāʾ*) is God's judgment of things established by His knowledge of and about them. God's knowledge concerning things is in keeping with what the objects of knowledge give, that is, their exact essences.[2] Determination (*qadar*)[3] means appointing the time for the exact states of things without any addition (to them). The decreeing of things is established by the essences of things. This is the very mystery of determination "for whoever has a heart, for whoever listens and bears witness" (Qurʾān 50:37) "and to God belongs the conclusive argument" (Qurʾān 6:149). That is because the judge (*ḥākim*) actually follows the essence of the issue he judges and its requirements, and the one who is judged judges the judge in complying with the former's essence. Thus, every judge is equal to the one who is judged through and in which he judges, whoever the judge (132) may be. Hence, be aware of this issue, for determination is unknown only because of its intense manifestation; it is unknown, and hence people seek it and persist in their seeking.

Know that God's messengers, in their capacity as messengers and not as saints and gnostics, occupy the same levels as their communities. The knowledge with which they have been sent corresponds to the needs of their community, no more and no less. Now, the communities excel (*tafāḍala*) each other, some are greater than others. Hence, the messengers excel regarding their knowledge of the message according to the level of their communities, as God said: "We preferred some of these messengers to others" (Qurʾān 2:253). Similarly, the messengers, as regards their knowledge of the sciences and rules which derives from their essences, also differ in excellence from each other in keeping with their predispositions, as God said: "We preferred some prophets to others" (Qurʾān 17:55). God said concerning creatures: "God preferred some of you to others regarding

1 *Ḥikma qadariyya.*

2 The notion that knowledge follows the object of knowledge is here reiterated. See the preceding chapter and ch. 5.

3 Generally in Islamic theology *qaḍāʾ* means predetermination, while a *qadar* decree appoints time. L. Gardet, "al-Ḳaḍāʾ wa'l-Ḳadar," E I2. Ibn al-ʿArabī adopts in principle this division ascribing predestination to the fixed entities in God's thought, and the decree in time to the concretization of the fixed entities in a certain time. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 23f.

sustenance" (Qur'ān 16:71). Sustenance is divided into spiritual like kinds of knowledge and sensual like foods. The Real sends down sustenance only in keeping with a "known measure," (Qur'ān 15:21) that is, deservingness required by the creatures, for God "gives everything (its measure) of creation" (Qur'ān 20:50), "and He sends down (things) in the measure He wills" (Qur'ān 42:27). He only wills what He knows and judges, and as we said above, His knowledge follows the known object.

The appointment of time belongs to the known thing, and also the decree, knowledge, desire and will follow the determination (*qadar*).[4] The mystery of determination is one of the loftiest kinds of knowledge, and God causes only those who are particularized by perfect knowledge to understand it. Knowledge of the mystery of determination brings about both absolute repose and painful suffering for the knower. Thus, it causes two contradictory effects. Through this mystery God describes Himself as Wrathful and Content, and through it the divine names oppose each other. Its reality (the reality of this mystery) judges both the absolute existence and the limited existence, and nothing is more perfect (133), stronger, greater than it, because of its general determination and its judgment of the contingent appearances and the essences of things.[5]

Since the prophets learn their knowledge only from specific divine revelations, their hearts are bereft of rational contemplation, because they know the intellect's inadequacy with respect to the rational perception of things as they really are. In like manner, divine communication is unable to perceive what can be perceived only by mystical experience. Consequently, perfect knowledge remains only within the confines of divine self-manifestation and in the Real's removing of the veils covering the hearts and eyes so that they are able to perceive things, eternal and contingent, nonexistent and existent, impossible, necessary and possible, as they really are in their essences.

Since Ezra sought the unique way, he was rebuked, as it was related in a tradition.[6] Had he sought revelation as we mentioned, maybe he would not have been rebuked regarding this matter. The proof of his heart's inadequacy is the question asked in one event: "How will God revive (this town) after its destruction?" (Qur'ān 2:259) We think that in this verse Ezra resembles Abraham, who said: "My Lord, show me how you revive the dead" (Qur'ān 2:260). This (question) requires an actual response which the Real made manifest in the Qur'ān, saying "God made him die for hundred years then revived him" (ibid., 259) and: "Look at the bones, how we revive them then cover them with flesh" (ibid.). He really saw how bodies grow, thus God showed him the modality (*kayfiyya*) (through which bodies are restored to life).

4 The last sentence shows that essentially no difference obtains between *qaḍā'* and *qadar* in that both decisions follow the known thing. The only difference is the time element, which the author ascribes to *qadar* in the beginning of this chapter but confuses in the last sentence with *qaḍā'*.

5 Kāshānī, p. 337.

6 See this tradition below.

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Then he asked about God's predetermination, which can be perceived only through revelation of things in their state of fixed entity, (that is), of nonexistence. Ezra was not given this (knowledge), for it belongs only to divine perception, and only God knows it, because this knowledge is the first keys, I mean, "the hidden keys which none knows but He" (Qurʾān 6:59). God informs only those of His servants He wills about some of these things.

(134) Know that these are called keys only in the state of opening (*fatḥ*); the state of opening is the state of linking the act of bringing into being and the things brought into being, or if you wish, say the state of the connecting of God's power (*qudra*) to the object of this power (*maqdūr*). Only God has experience (*dhawq*)[7] of this act. Regarding this (the acts of connection), no manifestation or revelation occurs, because power and (the ability) to act belong to God alone, for he possesses the absolute existence which cannot be limited. Since we are aware of God's rebuking Ezra for his request concerning predetermination, we know that he asked for knowledge of predetermination and the power connected to the object of power. Only the one who has absolute existence can require this knowledge and power. Ezra asked for something the existence of which cannot be experienced by humans, for the modalities (of creation) are perceived only through experience.

As for the tradition we related, that is, what God revealed to Ezra to the effect that "if you do not stop, I will erase your name from the register of prophecy,"[8] meaning I will remove from you (My) way of giving information and give you (the knowledge of things) through manifestation. (Now) manifestation occurs only in keeping with your predisposition, through which experiential perception takes place, hence you will know that your perception mirrors your predisposition. Then you contemplate the thing you sought, and if not seeing it, you know that the predisposition you sought is lost and that ability is one of the qualities of the divine essence. You know that God gives everything (its measure) of creation, and He withheld from you this unique predisposition; it is not your (measure) of creation. If it had been your (measure) of creation, the Real, who said that "He gives everything (its measure) of creation" (Qurʾān 20:50), would have given you this (predisposition). In this case, you yourself should abstain from making this request, to avoid the need of a divine prohibition. This was God's providence for Ezra; some people know it and others do not.[9]

Know that Sainthood (*walāya*)[10] is (like) the all-encompassing general sphere (*al-falak al-muḥīṭ*);[11] for this reason it never stops and has (the function) of general prophecy (*al-inbāʾ al-ʿāmm*). However, the prophecy of legislation (*nubuwwat*

7 By "God has experience…" Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to express the idea that only God can handle this act in the proper manner, that is, knowing all its modalities.

8 Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī, *Niʿmat al-dharīʿa fī nuṣrat al-sharīʿa*, Dār al-Masīr, al-Riyāḍ 1998, p. 113.

9 This paragraph exemplifies Ibn al-ʿArabī's way of writing in the present volume, which is full of repetitive explanations.

10 *Walāya* can be also rendered as Friendship or Nearness to God.

11 Very probably, our author uses this astronomical term to denote both the steadfastness and the exaltedness of *walāya*.

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al-tashrīʿ) and mission (*risāla*) came to an end. It ended with Muḥammad, (135) for no prophet has come after him, that is, a lawgiver or a person for whom a law is established, and no messenger, who is a lawgiver.[12] This report (about the difference between a prophet or messenger who is a lawgiver and God's saint [*walī*]) was a mortal blow to God's saints, because it involves the end of perfect and complete servanthood (which is enjoyed only by prophets). However, (on the other hand) the specific names "prophet" and "messenger" do not apply to God, because the servant does not want to share a name with his Lord.[13] Hence, God is not called by "prophet" or "messenger," but is named "friend" (saint) and described by that name, hence He said: "God is the friend (*walī*) of the believers" (Qurʾān 2:257) and "He is the Friend, the Praiseworthy" (Qurʾān 42:28). This name (*walī*) never ends and is applied to God's servants in this world and the world to come. Because of the end of prophecy and mission, no name has remained which is specifically applied to the servant and not to God.

However, God still assists (*laṭafa*) His servants by leaving to them general prophecy (*al-nubuwwa al-ʿāmma*) in which there is no legislation. Yet, He has left to them legislation through independent judgment (*ijtihād*) with the aim of establishing rules. He has bequeathed their scholars the power of legislation, saying "The scholars are the heirs of the prophets."[14] In this there is an inheritance only of the scholars' independent making of laws. If you observe a prophet speaking on matters not including legislation, he speaks in his capacity as a saint and a gnostic. For this reason, his position as a scholar is more complete and perfect than that of a messenger or legislator. If you hear one of the people of God saying or transmitting to you (the notion) that sainthood is higher than prophecy, he adds nothing to what we have said. Or if he says that the saint is above the prophet and the messenger, he means by this (the qualities) of one person, that is, the Messenger (Muḥammad) as a saint, is more complete than that of a prophet messenger. This does not mean that the saint who follows the Prophet is higher than the Prophet, for the follower never attains the rank of the one he follows in the way in which he follows him, because if he had attained his rank, he would not have been his follower. So understand (this)!

The (position) of the messenger and the lawgiving prophet derives from sainthood (*walāya*) and knowledge. Do you not see that God ordered the Prophet to seek increase in knowledge and not in anything else, hence he said, ordering him, "and say, O my Lord (136) increase my knowledge!" (Qurʾān 20:114) That is because you know that the law means the obligation (*taklīf*) to perform specific acts and the prohibition to perform others, and the place of this obligation is this

12 Yohanan Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunnī Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7(1986):177–215; Uri Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy – On the Interpretation of the Qurʾānic Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33)," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164(1)(2014):65–96.

13 Here one has the impression that the human being establishes the names, while actually the source of these names is the Qurʾān.

14 Bukharī III:10 (67).

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world which will come to an end. However, sainthood is not like an obligation, because if it had been terminated, it would have been terminated because of itself,[15] just as the mission ended because of itself. Had sainthood been terminated because of itself, its name would not have remained. But the name "saint" remains God's name, and this name is assimilated and realized by His servants and is associated with them.

This is his saying to Ezra: If you do not stop to ask about the essence of predetermination, I will erase your name from the register of prophecy. Then the issue (of predetermination) will reach you through revelation and self-manifestation; the name "messenger" and "prophet" applied to you will disappear, but sainthood will remain. However, since the circumstances demonstrate that God's address to him took the form of a threat, he knew, whenever these circumstances were connected to a divine address, that this was a threat to deprive him of some specific characteristics of sainthood in this world, for prophecy and mission are some traits of sainthood among others. Then he knew that he was superior to the saint who was deprived of legislative prophecy and mission.

However, another possible state that prophecy requires and that is connected to a saint proves this trait is a promise and not a threat. This is because his request is acceptable, for the prophet is a unique saint. By (observing) circumstances, the saint knows it is inconceivable that the prophet who shares in sainthood should do anythihg he knows God does not will or (try) to do anything that is impossible. If these circumstances affect one whom they affect in a stable condition, the divine address for him "I will erase your name from the register of prophecy" is a threat. This statement becomes a report that points to the sublimity of a remaining position. This position is for the prophets and messengers in the world (137) to come, which is not a place where laws are observed by the people who enter Paradise or those come to Hell.

We have limited (our discussion) to going into the two abodes, Paradise and Hell, for in the Day of Resurrection God gives laws to people who lived between two eras of prophets, to young children and the insane.[16] They will be gathered in one place to do justice, to punish the wrongdoers and to reward the people of Paradise.

When they are gathered in one place secluded from the others, God will send to them a prophet, who is the best individual among them, and this prophet will bring a fire and it will be presented to them on this day, and he will say: "I am the messenger of the Real to you." Some of them will believe in him and some will not. And he will say to them: "Enter into this fire with your souls, and whoever obeys me will be saved and enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me and offends my command will perish and be among the people of Hell." (It will happen actually): Whoever among them obeys the prophet and throws himself into the fire

15 Obligation will come to an end, because of the termination of the world, which will make obligation needless, not because of an inherent cause.

16 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī conveys the traditions that deal with these kinds of people before their going into Paradise and Hell, because in both abodes no law is implemented.

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will be happy and be rewarded for his acts; he will find this fire cool and peaceful. Whoever disobeys him deserves punishment and will enter into the fire and dwell therein because of his disobedient deeds, so that God will do justice to his servants. This corresponds to God's words, "On the Day when matters become dire" (Qur'ān 68:42, trans. AH), that is, a grave affair of the events of the Hereafter, and "they will be called to prostrate themselves" (ibid.), which means obligation and legislation. Among them are those who are able (to prostrate themselves) and those who are not. God said regarding the latter: "they will be called to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to do so" (ibid.), just as some servants, like Abū Jahl[17] and others, could not obey God's command in this world. This is the measure of legislation, which will be left in the world to come on the Day of Resurrection, before the entry into Paradise and Hell. For this reason we have limited our discussion. Praise be to God.

17 Abū Jahl was one of the staunch enemies of the Prophet in Mecca. See Qur'ān 96:6, 7, and their commentaries.

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15 The bezel of the prophetic wisdom[1] exists in the essence of Jesus

(138) From the water of Maryam or from the breath of Jibrīl/in the form of a human being produced of clay

The spirit came into being in an essence untainted/of the Nature which is called *sijjīn*[2]

For this reason, his stay (in heaven) lasted by decree for a long time/more than a thousand years

It was a spirit of God not from another, hence/he revived the dead and produced birds out of clay

Till his association with His Lord/through which he influenced the high and the low (people) became valid

God purified his body and cleansed/his spirit and made him like Himself in (his power) of creation[3]

Know that one of the traits of the spirits is that everything they tread on becomes alive and life permeates throughout it. For this reason, al-Sāmirī,[4] knowing this affair, took a portion of sand from the messenger's tracks, who was Jibrīl, that is, the Spirit. Since al-Sāmirī realized it was Jibrīl, he knew that life permeated everything Jibrīl trod on. Hence, he took a portion of sand from the tracks of the messenger,[5] either with his hands (*qabḍa*) or with his two fingers (*qabṣa*), that is, a handful or with the tips of his fingers.[6] He threw the sand at the calf and the calf lowed, for the voice of the cow is lowing. Had he established (the idol) in some other form, the form established would have made the appropriate sound, such as the grumbling of camels, the bleating of lambs and sheep, and the speaking of human beings.

1 According to al-Qaysarī and al-Kāshānī, Ibn al-ʿArabī ascribes prophecy to Jesus, because his prophecy is eternal. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 25.
2 A unique word in the Qur'ān, which mainly designates a heavenly book or the lowest place on earth in which the Devil and his followers reside. E I2.
3 Because like God, Jesus created birds out of clay.
4 There is a discussion in Qur'ān exegesis on the essence of this figure. See, for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. IV, p. 534 (on Qur'ān 20:95); Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, part 22, p. 101 (on Qur'ān 20:85).
5 Qur'ān 20:96,
6 Wehr's dictionary defines *qabṣa* as follows: "as much as may be taken between the finger and the thumb, a pinch."

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This measure of life which permeates things is called divine nature (*lāhūt*), and human nature (*nāsūt*) is the substrate in which this spirit dwells. *Nāsūt* is called spirit, because of that which inheres in it. When the trustworthy spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn* – Qurʾān 26:193), Jibrīl, took on the shape of a perfect human being before Maryam (139), she imagined that he was a man who wanted to lie with her, hence she sought refuge in God with all her heart, so that God would save her from this person, because she knew that this was prohibited. As a result, she experienced the complete presence of God, which is the essential spirit (*al-rūḥ al-maʿnawī*). Had Jibrīl blown his breath into her when she was in this state, Jesus would have been born such that none would have tolerated him, because of his ill-temperedness which derived from his mother's state. When he (Jibrīl) said to her, "I am but a messenger of your Lord" and I came "to grant to you a pure son" (Qurʾān 19:19), she was relieved of her depression and was delighted. At that very moment he blew Jesus into her.

Jibrīl was transmitting God's word to Maryam just as a messenger transmits God's word to his community. These are God's words: "(Jesus, the son of Maryam, was God's messenger) and His word which He conveyed to Maryam and a spirit from Him" (Qurʾān 4:171). Thus, a desire arose in Maryam. As a result, the body of Jesus was created from the real water of Maryam and the imaginary water of Jibrīl,[7] which pervaded the moisture of his breath, because the breath of an animate being contains humidity, an element of water in it. The body of Jesus was composed of imagined and real water, and he appeared in the form of a human being because of his mother and because of Jibrīl's taking the form of a human being. (All this happened) to make the creation of this human species occur in the usual way.[8]

Jesus appeared as one who revived the dead, because he was a divine spirit. In this act, revivification belonged to God and the breath to Jesus, just as the breath belongs to Jibrīl and the essence of creation (literally: the word) to God. Hence his revivification of the dead was real with respect to his breath, just as he appeared out of the form of his mother. His revivification was also assumed as his own act, but actually it was God's act. Thus, in his reality in which he was created, he combined (the real and the imagined aspects), as we said, he was created of imagined and real water. Consequently, revivification is ascribed to him in a real manner in one respect, and in an imagined manner (140) in another. It was said about Him that in a real manner "he revives the dead" (Qurʾān 42:9) and in an imagined manner: "You breathed into it (the clay) and it became a bird by God's permission" (Qurʾān

7 Qurʾān 86:6–7.

8 I do not know for certain what Ibn al-ʿArabī means when he says "this human species." Possibly he means that Jesus was born like all human beings. However, Maryam's conception was extraordinary, and regarding this, it is inconceivable to state that it was the usual way. Thus, only the birth was as usual; however, our author does not speak here in an exact manner. On Jesus' spirit see Souad Hakim, "The Spirit and the Son of the Spirit," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 31(2002):1–29.

5:110).[9] The phrase "by God's permission" is connected to "it became," not to "you breathed."[10] It is also possible that the agent who is Jesus breathed into the clay, and as a result the clay became a corporeal, sentient form. In like manner (we should deal with) "he cured the blind and the leprous" (ibid.) and all that is ascribed to him and to God's permission in the phrases "by My permission" or "by God's permission." If "by God's permission" is connected with breathing, then he who breathes has permission to breathe, and the bird becomes alive through the one who breathes with God's permission. If the breather does so without God's permission, (even) then the creation of the bird derives from His permission. In such a case, the agent exists in the word *yakūnu* (it will be). If this occurrence did not involve imagination and reality (simultaneously), this form would not have these two aspects. However, this matter involves two aspects, because the creation of Jesus involved both.

Jesus sprang from humility to such an extent that his community was ordered "to pay the poll-tax with their own hands (*ʿan yadin*)[11] being humiliated" (Qurʾān 9:29), and also if one of them (the Christians) is struck on his cheek he should turn the other cheek toward the one who struck him and not try to overcome his assailant or seek vengeance. This trait of Jesus was inherited from his mother, because the woman is lower and humbler (than the man), for she is under his authority formally and sensually. Jesus' power to revive and heal derived from Jibrīl's breath when the latter took a human form. Thus, Jesus revived the dead when he was in a human form. If Jibrīl had not come[12] in the form of a human, but rather in another genus of the genera, whether animal, plant, or mineral, Jesus would have revived (the dead) only after assimilating this genus and appearing in it. Likewise, had Jibrīl come in his luminous form, which is devoid of terrestrial genera and elements, because he does not go beyond his nature, (141) Jesus would have revived the dead only by appearing in this luminous natural form, not in an elemental form, still retaining the human form he received from his mother.

When he was reviving the dead, it was said about him: "he/not he." Looking at him induced perplexity, just as the intelligent person became perplexed when contemplating Jesus, because the former saw a human being resurrecting the dead, humans not animals, which is a divine trait. (Hence), the seer became perplexed, for he saw a human form that possesses a divine faculty.

Thus, some people believed in incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and (thought) that he was God, because he revived the dead. For this reason, concealment (*kufr*)[13] was attributed to them, because they concealed God, who revived the dead employing Jesus' human form. Hence, God said: "Those who said that God was *al-masīḥ* (Messiah),

9 The accurate citation is "by My permission." "By God's permission" appears in a parallel verse told by Jesus himself (Qurʾān 3:49).

10 In this case the agent of creation is God and not Jesus.

11 I translate this phrase on the basis of Uri Rubin's translation of the Qurʾān into Hebrew (Tel Aviv 2005).

12 Read *wa-law lam* (Kāshānī, p. 358) instead of *wa-lam* in Affifi's edition, which seems to be a misprint.

13 For the meaning of *kufr* as concealment, see the third chapter on Noah.

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the son of Maryam, are concealers" (Qurʾān 5:17, 72). In their complete saying they combined error and concealment; they did not err, because they said "he is God," or because of their words, "he is the son of Maryam," but because they ascribed to God, (who in their view) was responsible for the revivification of the dead, a human mortal form, when they said, "the son of Maryam," and no doubt he was the son of Maryam. However, the listener imagined that they attributed divinity to a human form, and made divinity the essence of this form, but this they did not do. (Instead) from the beginning, they included God's essence in the form of a human who is the son of Maryam. Hence, they distinguished between the form and its appearance (literally: its aspect); they did not identify the form with its very appearance, like Jibrīl who took the form of a human and did not breathe (into Maryam), then he breathed. Thus, the breathing is distinguished from the form. Although the breathing issued from the form, the form might remain without breathing, for breathing is not essential to the definition of the form.

For this reason, debate arose among the people of religious communities regarding (142) the nature of Jesus. Some argued from the viewpoint of his mortal human form and said that he was the son of Maryam. On the basis of his apparent human form, others argued that he was related to Jibrīl. Referring to his resurrection of the dead, still others argued that he was related to God's spirit; that is, through his breath, he brought the dead back to life. Sometimes people imagined that God was in him, sometimes that the angel was in him, and other times that mortality and humanity were in him. Thus, each thinker regarded Jesus according to the form that prevails in him (the thinker). Consequently, Jesus was God's word, God's spirit, God's servant, and these appellations concerning his sentient form are not related to others, but every person is related to his real father, and not to the one who breathed his spirit into the human form. Because when God shaped the human body, as He said, "When I shaped him" (Qurʾān 15:29), it was God who breathed into him his spirit, ascribing the spirit in the human being and his essence to Him. The case of Jesus is different, for the shaping of his body and his human form was included in the spiritual breath, and other humans were not shaped like him.

All existents are God's words, which will never be exhausted,[14] because they derive from the word "be," and "be" is God's word.[15] Can the word "be" be ascribed to God, to his ipseity, so that its essence cannot be known? Or does God descend to the form of him who says "be," so that the word "be" serves as the reality of this form to which He descends and in which He manifests Himself? Some gnostics adhered to the first view and some to the second, and some others became perplexed not knowing (the solution). This issue can be known only through experience, as when Abū Yazīd (al-Bisṭāmī) breathed into the ant he had killed, restoring it to life. In this moment he knew the One who breathes, and then he breathed. In (this matter) he was like Jesus.[16]

14 Cf. Qurʾān 18:109: "If the whole ocean were ink for writing the words of my Lord, it would run dry before those words were exhausted…" (trans. AH).
15 Every existent is created by God's word "be" (*kun*). See Qurʾān 2:117, 16:40.
16 Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 48f.

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As for spiritual revivification through knowledge, that is, the divine, eternal, elevated, and luminous life, (143) God said: "Whoever was dead and We restored him to life and established for him light by which he walks among people" (Qurʾān 6:122). Everyone who restores life to a dead soul by the life of knowledge regarding a specific issue connected with the knowledge of God brings him to life, so that he has a light by which he "walks among people," that is, among his likeness in form.

Had he and us not been/what exists would not have been
We are really servants/and God is our master
We are His essence, know (this)!/when you say "a human being"
Do not be concealed by human being/for He gave you a proof
If you are real and created[17]/you will be merciful through God
If you feed His creation through Him[18]/you will (cause people to) rest and receive good nourishment[19]
We give Him what is manifested/in us through Him and He gives us
The whole matter is divided/between Him and us
Whoever knows through my heart revives this matter/when He revives us
We are in Him as beings/essences and pieces of time
(Whereas) He is not permanent in us/but He gives us life

The proof of what we have said regarding the spiritual breath which joins the mortal human form is that the Real qualifies Himself by the merciful breath (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*),[20] and that which is qualified by a quality should follow this quality and all that this quality requires. You know that the one who breathes (follows) what the breath (144) requires. For this reason, the divine breath receives the forms of the cosmos. It serves as a material substance for the forms and it is nature itself.

The elements are one of the natural forms as that which is above them and that which derives from them, the latter being the elevated spirits placed above the seven heavens. As for the spirits of the seven heavens and their essences, they are elemental, because they emerge from the smoke[21] that is generated from the elements. Also the angels who are generated from each heaven are elemental, while those who are above them are natural. For this reason, God described them, the heavenly group, as rivals,[22] because nature is self-contradictory, and the self-contradiction which exists in the divine names, that is, the relationships, derives from the breath. Do you not see how the Essence which is beyond this aspect (of self-contradiction) does not need the created beings? For this reason, the cosmos emerged in the form of its originator, that is, the divine breath.

17 If you are real in essence and created in form, you will be merciful.
18 You should feed your soul with God's spirit.
19 Qurʾān 56:88.
20 The concrete, external forms of the cosmos reflect the name the All-Merciful, whose breath serves as the prime matter of the cosmos. When God speaks, He breathes out, and His words become the existents in the cosmos. SPK, pp. 19, 34, 127.
21 The identification of the heaven with smoke appears in Qurʾān 41:11.
22 Qurʾān 38:69.

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When it is hot, it rises, and when it is cold and humid, it falls, for precipitation belongs to coldness and humidity, and when it is dry, it is stable without trembling. Precipitation drives from coldness and humidity. Do you not see how the physician who wants to give a patient a remedy to drink (first) looks at the sedimentation in his urine? When he sees that it is precipitating, he knows that the illness has completely matured and gives him medication to drink in order to hasten his cure. The urine precipitates only because of its natural humidity and coldness.

God kneaded the clay of the human being with his two hands. Though both are right hands, they confront each other, yet the difference between them is quite evident, even if they are only two, I mean two hands, because that which affects nature is only that which fits her, and nature is self-contradictory. He brought two hands (to create the human being). Since He brought him into existence with two hands, which are ascribed to Him (*al-yadayni al-muḍāfayni*),[23] He called him *bashar*, because of His direct connection (*mubāshara*) (to the creation) fitting this (honorable) act. God did so because (145) of his concern for this human species, and He said to the one (the Devil) who declined prostration before Adam: "What prevented you from prostrating before him whom I created with My own hands, do you deem yourself greater" (Qurʾān 38:75) than one who was like you, that is, (composed of) of elements? "Or are you loftier" (Qurʾān ibid.), than the elements? (In fact) you are not so.

By "loftier" He means one who in his luminous form makes himself loftier than the elemental (beings), even if one is a natural entity. The human being is superior to other elemental species only because of his being created directly (*bashar*) of clay by God. He is superior to all entities created of elements (but) without direct connection (*mubāshara*). His rank is above the terrestrial and celestial angels; however, according to the divine statement, the higher angels are better than the human species.

Whoever wishes to know the divine breath should know the cosmos, for whoever knows himself (or his soul) knows his Lord,[24] who is manifested in the cosmos. This means that the cosmos manifests itself in the breath of the Merciful who gives vent to the divine names which feel distressed because their effects are not manifested. Hence, God bestows favor on Himself by that which He brought into existence with His breath, for the first effect of His breath was in this divine domain (*janāb*),[25] and afterward the effects of the divine breath do not cease descending (in the cosmos hierarchy) by the divine encompassing release till the last existent thing.

23 Ibn al-ʿArabī does not express reservations concerning this anthropomorphic picture of the creation of the human being. However, the fact that he uses the verb *aḍāfa* (he ascribed) to designate the connection between God and His hands points to some kind of reservation; that is, God does not have hands, but as they are ascribed to him in the Qurʾān, one cannot escape describing Him by this word.

24 For this dictum, see ch. 3, n. 4.

25 Very probably by this effect the author means the appearance of the divine names and attributes. Kāshānī, p. 373.

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All things are latent in the essence of the breath/as is light in the essence of dawn

And knowledge through proof is/like daybreak for the sleeper

Because he (the sleeper) sees what I said/(that is) a dream which shows the breath

My words relieve him of every anxiety/when he recites (*sūrat*) *ʿabasa*[26]

God manifests Himself to him/who comes seeking burning coal

He (Moses) considered it fire, but it was light/to kings and nightfarers[27]

(146) If you understand my words/you will know that you are needy

Had he (Moses) sought something else (not fire)/he would have seen the Real in it, and God does not change His way (of self-manifestation)

As for the essence of Jesus (we say) that when the Real placed Himself in the station of "until we know" (Qurʾān 47:31),[28] and (in fact) He knew, He asked Jesus about what was ascribed to him, was it true or not, notwithstanding His foreknowledge of this ascription's occurrence or nonoccurrence. Thus, God said to him: "Did you say to the people take me and my mother as two gods rather than God?" (Qurʾān 5:116) Out of courtesy, one should answer the questioner. Since He manifested Himself to Jesus in this station and form, wisdom required an answer that distinguishes the essence of many, and he said giving precedence to God's transcendence: "May You be exalted" (*subḥānaka*, Qurʾān ibid.), Then turning directly to God, he used the word "You" (and he added) "I am not allowed," with respect to myself in comparison to You, "to say what I have not the right to say," that is, what my identity and essence require. "If I had said such a thing, You would have known it" (ibid.), for you are the speaker, and whoever says something knows what he says, and you are the tongue by which I speak, as God's messenger informs us about his Lord in the divine tradition: "I am his tongue by which he speaks."[29] He made His essence similar to the tongue of the speaker, ascribing speech to His servant.

Then the righteous servant completed his answer, saying, "You know what is in myself" (my soul – ibid.), for the speaker is the Real, "while I do not know what" (ibid.) it contains.[30] He denied knowledge of Jesus' essence, with respect to his essence, not referring to his being a speaker and a producer of effects. "Indeed, You are" (*innaka anta*, ibid.). He says these words ("You are"), (using

26 *ʿAbasa* means "he frowned" (Qurʾān 80:1). This chapter of the Qurʾān deals mainly with the Resurrection.

27 That is, to the elite and the common people.

28 This verse speaks of God's trial of the people in order to know their characteristics. However, God knows from eternity these traits, but he wishes to know them from terrestrial phenomena, that is, to know people from their own acts and not from His eternal knowledge. As usual, Ibn al-ʿArabī exploits complete verses and phrases of verses, taking them out of their context for his own objectives.

29 Bukhārī, LXXXI:38 (6502). Ch. 1, n. 81.

30 Ibn al-ʿArabī changes the verse, which reads in the original: "While I do not know what Your soul contains" or "what is in Yourself" (*nafsika*).

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the pronouns) of separation and support (*al-faṣl wa'l-ʿimād*),[31] to emphasize and confirm his message, because only God knows absolutely the hidden things (*ʿallām al-ghuyūb* – ibid.).

(In his answer) he separated and joined together, unified and multiplied, broadened and narrowed, then he said, completing the answer: "I did not say to them but what you commanded me to say" (ibid., 117). First, he denied that he had said, and then he spoke in the affirmative (147) out of courtesy to the questioner. Had he not acted in this manner, he would have been described as lacking in knowledge of the realities, which was far from his conduct. For this reason, he said: "but what you commanded me to say" (ibid.), (which means) You are the speaker through my tongue, and You are my tongue.

(Now), think how subtle and precise is the following spiritual and divine message: (Jesus said) "Worship God"! (ibid.). He introduced the name God (*allāh*), because the worshipers differ in their religious observances and because of the variety of religions; he did not particularize a name, but rather introduced the name which embraces all (religions). Then he said: "My Lord and your Lord" (ibid.). It is well known that one's relationship with a certain existent lord differs from one's relationship with another. For this reason, when he said, "my Lord and your Lord," he distinguished between two appellations; the first applies to the speaker and the second to the addressee. (He said), "but what you commanded me to say" (ibid.), thus he affirmed himself as one who is commanded, which meant his being only a worshiper, for the one commanded is supposed to obey, even if he does not.

Since the command descends according to the law of ranks, everyone who appears in a certain rank is characterized by the reality that this rank grants. The rank of the commanded possesses a law which appears in every commanded person, just as the rank of the commander possesses a law which is manifested in every commander. The Real says: "Observe the prayer" (Qurʾān 2:43), for He is the commander, while the obliged person (*mukallaf*)[32] is the commanded.[33] And the servant says: "O my Lord, forgive me" (Qurʾān 7:151, 38:35, 71:28), for he is the commander, and the Real is the commanded. What the Real requires from the servant by His command is the same as what the servant requires from the Real by his command. For this reason, every request is necessarily complied with, even if its compliance is postponed, just as some people who are obliged to observe a prayer time postpone their prayer, and when possible pray at another time. Thus, compliance with the request is necessary if only by intention.

Then he (Jesus) said: "I was (a witness) over them" (Qurʾān 5:117), and he did not say over me with them, as he said, "my Lord and your Lord" (ibid.), "(I was) a witness during my stay among them" (ibid.), because prophets are (148)

31 W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, Cambridge 1967, II, p. 259.

32 This term can also be translated as "one who is charged with responsibilities." Izutsu, p. 171.

33 I read *wa'l-mukallaf (huwa) al-maʾmūr* instead of *al-mukallaf al-maʾmūr* in the text, because of the structure of the following sentence.

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witnesses over their communities so long as they stay in them. "When You took my soul" (ibid.), meaning when You raised me to Yourself,[34] concealing them from me and me from them, "You were the watcher over them" (ibid.) not in my matter but in theirs, for You were their sight, which required observation.

The person's witnessing of himself is like the Real's witnessing of him. (Jesus) made Him a watcher through this name (*al-raqīb*), because He described himself as a witness. Wishing to distinguish between himself and his Lord, he would be known as (a witness), because of his being a servant, and the Real is the Real, because He is his Lord. He called himself a witness and the Real the Watcher, giving precedence to his people over himself and saying: "Over them (I was) a witness during my stay among them" (*ʿalayhim shahīdan*), while postponing their appearance in relation to the Real, saying, "You were the Watcher over them" (ibid.), because the Lord merits precedence in rank.

Then he let (us) know that the Real, the Watcher, bears the name which Jesus attributed to himself, that is, the Witness, in his words "a witness over them" (ibid.). And he said: "You are Witness of everything" (ibid., *wa-anta ʿalā kull shayʾ shahīd)*; the word "every" (*kull*) denotes generality, while "thing" denotes the most undefined word. He introduced the name "witness," because He is the Witness of every witnessed thing in keeping with what this witnessed thing requires. He pointed out that the Real is the Witness of Jesus' people, saying, "over them (I was) a witness during my stay among them" (ibid.). This is the witness of the Real as embodied in Jesus' matter, just as it was proved that He was his tongue, hearing and seeing.

Then Jesus expressed a phrase referring to himself and another referring to Muḥammad. As for the phrase that belonged to Jesus, it was Jesus speaking God's message about him in His book, and as for Muḥammad's phrase, it reached him in a certain place, and he uttered it repeatedly without turning to another phrase until dawn's first light. "If you punish them, (it is) because they are Your servants, and if You forgive them, (it is) because You are the All-mighty, the All-Wise" (ibid., 118). Both the word "they" and the word "he" are third-person pronouns[35] (149), as he said: "They were the ones who disbelieved" (Qurʾān 48:25, AH), using the third-person pronoun (the pronoun of the concealed), for hiddenness concealed them from what is meant by the witnessed one who is present (*al-mashhūd al-ḥāḍir*).[36] And he said, "If you punish them" (ibid.) with the third-person pronoun, which is the very veil that conceals them from the Real. He reminded them of God before they will be present (on the Day of Resurrection), and when they will be in attendance before Him, the leaven will dominate the dough and will make the dough like itself. "Because they are Your servants," (he said), particularizing his form of address (in the second-person pronoun) because of their state of unity with God.

No humiliation is greater than that of servants, because they are incapable of acting freely, for they submit to the will of their master, who has no partner in the dominion

34 Cf. Qurʾān 3:55.
35 Literally: pronoun of the hidden or the concealed (*ḍamīr al-ghāʾib*).
36 Meaning: Jesus.

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over them. That is because he said: "Your servants." Hence, he singled them out. By punishment he meant their humiliation, and no people were humiliated more than they, because they were servants. Their essences required their being humiliated, hence You did not demean them any less than is required by their essences.

"If You forgive (*taghfir*) them" means if You conceal them from being punished as they deserve, because of their transgression; that is, You prepared a cover for them to conceal them from punishment and shield them from it.[37] "Because You are the All-Mighty" (the All-Mighty – *al-ʿazīz*) means the one whose protection is unassailable (*al-manīʿ al-ḥimā*).[38] When the Real gives this name to one of His servants, He is called the Strengthener (*al-muʿizz*), and the one who is given this name is called mighty (*al-ʿazīz*). The one whose protection is unassailable is kept from the harm of punishment and suffering intended by God as the Punisher and Afflicter. He presented the pronoun of separation and support (*al-faṣl wa'l-ʿimād*)[39] to emphasize his message and as a safeguard of the coherence of his verse: "You are the Knower of the hidden things" and "You are the Watcher over them." Likewise he said: "Because You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (In this verse) Jesus asked God, beseeching Him in his request all nightlong until daybreak for an answer. Had he heard an answer after the first question he would not have repeated (his request). The Real detailed the reasons for their punishment and Jesus responded (150) each time repeating this verse (ibid., 118). Had he considered God's presentation preferable, he would have invoked God against them, not for them. Jesus put before God what they deserved, that is, submission to God and their exposing to His forgiveness.

It is related that when the Real loves the voice of his servant invoking Him, He postpones His response to him until the servant repeats his request out of His love for him and not out of His turning away from him. For this reason, he indicates the name "the All-Wise," because he who is wise puts things in their proper places and does not allow them to deviate from what their realities require through their attributes. Thus, the wise is he who knows well the order of things. Jesus repeated this verse, because he possessed great knowledge of God. Whoever recites (the Qurʾān) should recite it in this manner, otherwise silence is more appropriate for him.

If God guides a servant to speak of something, He guides him only because He wishes to respond to him and satisfy his need. Hence, let no one think that what one is directed to comes late. Let him rather persist like the Messenger's persistence in his repetition of this verse in all his states, so that he may hear with his ears or with his inner hearing (*samʿ*), in whatever way you want, or in whatever way God may make him[40] hear His response. If God rewards you with a request of the tongue, He will make you hear with your ear, and if He rewards you with a spiritual request, He will make you hear with your inner hearing.

37 For the verb *ghafara* in the meaning of "he concealed," see the beginning of p. 74 of the Arabic text.

38 Ibn al-ʿArabī uses here improper annexation (*iḍāfa ghayr ḥaqīqīyya*). Wright, *Grammar*, II, p. 64.

39 See n. 31 above.

40 The text has "make you hear" (*asmaʿaka*).

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16 The bezel of the wisdom of mercy[1] exists in the essence of Solomon

(151) "It" (Qurʾān 27:30), meaning the letter, "is from Solomon" (ibid.), "and it is" (ibid.), that is, its contents are (written) "in the name of God, the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate" (ibid.). Some people learned the precedence of Solomon's name over God's name, but (this conclusion) is wrong. What is said concerning this precedence is improper with respect to Solomon's knowledge of God. How could their utterances be appropriate, for as Bilqīs[2] said about this: "A honorable letter has been delivered to me" (ibid. 29), that is, one honoring her? Possibly what stirred them to speak as they did was the incident in which Chosroes tore up the Prophet's letter. However, he did not tear it up until he had read it and knew its contents. So too would Bilqīs have done, had she not been guided as she was, and the letter would not have been protected from being burned, whether its honorable sender's name had been given precedence over God's (name) or not.

Solomon introduced two kinds of mercy: the mercy of favor (*raḥmat al-imtinān*) and the mercy of obligation (*raḥmat al-wujūb*), which correspond to the All-Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) and the All-Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*), respectively. As the All-Merciful He bestows His favors freely, and as the All-Compassionate He is obliged to give favors. This obligation derives from His bestowal; the All-Compassionate is included in the All-Merciful. That is because God decreed on Himself mercy[3] for (the benefit of) the servant, because the Real mentions the acts carried out by the servant for which he deserves mercy. Mercy is incumbent on God, and He ordained it for Himself, I mean the mercy of obligation. Servants who belong to this kind (of people who carry out acts and deserve mercy) know the identity of the one who carries out their acts.

Human acts are divided among eight organs. The Real informed us that He is the essence of every organ, hence the agent of human acts is solely the Real,

1 Solomon is associated with Mercy, because in his letter to Queen Bilqīs he mentioned God the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. Qurʾān 27:29–30. See below.

2 This is the name of the Queen of Sheba in the Qurʾān. At first Ibn al-ʿArabī thought that she was born to a father of the demons (*abūhā min al-jinn*) and to a human mother (*ummuhā min al-ins*), then he changed his mind and denied his first view of her. *Al-Muʿjam*, pp. 215.

3 Qurʾān 6:54.

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while the form (of the act) (152) belongs to the servant.[4] The essence is contained in him (the servant), that is, only His name, because He is the essence of what is manifested. (Because God is manifested in things) He is called Creation (*khalq*) and because of Him the names The Manifest and the Last belong to the servant, given that he was nonexistent then existent. And because the manifestation of the servant and his acts depend on Him, he bears the names The Hidden and The First. Thus, when you see creation, you see the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.

This knowledge[5] was not concealed from Solomon, but rather it was part of the dominion (he enjoyed over things) which was appropriate to none after him, that is, the manifestation of his dominion in the sensuous world. Muḥammad was given the same trait Solomon received, but he did not manifest it. God gave Muḥammad the power to overcome a demon which came to him in the night to kill him. He planned to seize and tie it to one of the mosque's columns until morning so that the children of al-Madīna could play with it.[6] He (Muḥammad) mentioned Solomon's request, but God thwarted it. Although Muḥammad was granted power, he did not manifest it, while Solomon did. Solomon (asked God to grant him) a dominion (*mulk*),[7] not absolute dominion, hence we know that he wished to possess some dominion. We are aware that other people shared with him each part of the dominion granted to him by God, but he was particularized by joining all these parts together and by the report about the manifested demon. Thus, he was particularized by the aggregation of all parts of dominion and by its manifestation. Had Muḥammad not spoken in the tradition that "God enabled me to (overcome the demon)," we would have said that since he did not wish to seize it, God reminded him of Solomon's request. That way he might know that God had not granted him power to seize it. Thus, God denied him (his request). Since he said, "God enabled me to (overcome the demon)," we know that God granted him the power to act freely. And God reminded him and he remembered Solomon's request, (thus) teaching himself how to behave. As a result, we learn in general that no other human being after Solomon was bequeathed with manifestation of this power.

Regarding this issue, our aim is only to discuss it, calling attention to the two kinds of mercy Solomon mentioned whose names in Arabic are *al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate). God restricts (153) the mercy of obligation and derestricts the mercy of favor, in His saying, "My mercy encompasses all things" (Qurʾān 7:156), even the divine names, that is, the realities of relationships. He bestows favors on the divine names through us. Thus, we are the result of the mercy of favor through the divine names and the lordly relationships.

4 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the word "agent" (*ʿāmil*) to indicate that the Real is the cause of the occurrence of the act but not of its characteristics. This is reminiscent of al-Ghazālī's theory of causality as elaborated in his non-philosophical works. According to this theory, God's power makes the series of causes and effects move. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality."

5 Solomon was aware of the idea that God is the agent of his acts and that he is a manifestation of Him.

6 Bukhārī, VIII:75 (3423).

7 Qurʾān 38:35.

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Then he obliged Himself to bestow favors through our self-manifestation and he made us know that He is our essence so we may know that He obliged Himself to bestow favors only for Himself. Consequently, mercy does not exceed Him, for on whom would He bestow favors were none to exist other than He?

However, we should not ignore the difference between entities, for people excel one another in knowledge, so it is said that this person is more learned than another, although the Essence (of all things) is one. This means that the attribute of knowledge overcomes the attribute of will (*irāda*), just as the attribute of will overcomes the attribute of power, and this is the hierarchy of the divine attributes.[8] Likewise, the divine hearing and seeing (are arranged). All the divine names are graded in a hierarchy. In the same manner creation is arranged according to a hierarchy; for example, we say that one individual is more knowledgeable than another, although the Essence is one. Just as you give precedence to a certain divine name and you call and depict it by all the names, the manifested creation has all the attributes of that with which it is compared. Thus, every part of the cosmos contains all its parts; that is, every part is the substrate of the realities of the whole cosmos. Hence, our saying that Zayd is inferior to ʿAmr in knowledge does not infringe (the idea) that the Real's Essence is the essence of both. Equally, just as ʿAmr's essence is more perfect and knowing than Zayd's, the divine names excel each other, yet they are none other than the Real.

As a knowing God is more general than God who wills or is All-Mighty, His Essence, (nevertheless), does not change and He is as He is. As a result, you, my friend, cannot know Him and be ignorant of Him or affirm Him and deny Him in one aspect, unless you affirm Him by the aspect He affirms Himself and deny Him by the aspect He denies Himself. (This is) like the verse combining denial and affirmation with respect to Him when (154) God says: "There is nothing like Him" (Qurʾān 42:11), by which He denies, and "He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing," by which He affirms. He affirms (Himself) through an attribute which includes every creature that hears and sees. In this world a creature can exist that is concealed from the perception of some people, but it will be made manifest to all people in the world to come, which is the abode of living just like this world. In the latter, the living essence is concealed from some servants, so that particularization and difference concerning (the perception) of the realities of the cosmos are manifested (only to some people). The Real is more manifested in him who possesses a general perception than in him who does not possess such a perception. Do not be veiled (from the truth) through the hierarchy of things and say that the statement that the Real is the Essence of creation[9] is false, after I have shown you the hierarchy of the divine names whose identity with the Real you do not doubt, for He is named by them, and this is God.

8 Possibly Ibn al-ʿArabī follows here al-Ghazālī's scheme of God's attributes according to which knowledge raises will and will raises power. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," p. 83; *Iḥyāʾ*, Vol. IV, pp. 249f (ch. *bayān ḥaqīqat al-tawḥīd alladhī huwa aṣl al-tawakkul*).

9 The text has "creation is the essence of the Real" (*al-khalq huwiyyat al-ḥaqq*), which seems to me incorrect and should be replaced by the transposed subject and predicate.

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Moreover, how could Solomon give precedence to his name over God's name,[10] as they claimed, despite his being a part of the whole creation which the attribute of mercy brought into existence? He should have placed the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate first so that the dependence of the object of mercy on the Real would be right. Making that which deserves the place of the last be the first and vice versa is the reverse of realities.

Because of her wisdom and elevation, Bilqīs did not mention the one who sent the letter to her. She did so to teach her followers that she was aware of things whose ways they did not know. This is a part of the divine direction regarding kingdom, for if the people of the state do not know the way reports reach the king, they will be afraid to act freely. Only when they know they are protected from danger of the ruler discovering their deeds will they act freely. If they knew for certain who delivers reports to their king, they would blandish him and bribe him liberally in order to do as they want, knowing that their deeds will not reach the king's notice. Bilqīs merely said: "(A honorable letter) has been delivered to me," without naming the sender, because that was her policy, by which she kept the people of her kingdom and its elevated leaders cautious of her. (155) Thus, she earned the right to be superior to them.

As for the superiority of the human knower over the demonic knower regarding the knowledge of the mysteries of action and the special nature of things, it is known through the aspect of time, for a twinkling of the eye of the beholder[11] is quicker than one's rising from one's seat, because the movement of a glance in the perception of its object is more rapid than the motion of the body. That is, because the duration of the movement of a glance is the same as the (duration of the) perception of the object of sight, notwithstanding the distance between the beholder and the object. (For example), the duration of opening the eye equals the duration of the eye's perception of the fixed stars, and closing the eye equals the ceasing of perception. Rising from one's seat is not as quick.

Asaf ibn Berechya[12] was faster than the demons, for his speech and action occurred in the same instant. As a result, in this moment, Solomon saw with his own eyes Bilqīs' throne established before him, lest he should imagine that he perceived the throne in its place without its being moved (from its place). In our view, because of the simultaneous occurrence (of speech and the establishment of the throne), no movement (of the throne from its original place to Solomon's palace) happened. Instead, (the throne in its original place) entered a state of nonexistence and was brought back into existence (in Solomon's palace) with the awareness of none, except the one who knew God's saying: "No indeed, they are perplexed regarding a new creation" (Qur'ān 50:15). They immediately saw what they were looking at.

10 Qur'ān 27:30.
11 Cf. Qur'ān 27:40.
12 Muslim tradition identifies "the one who has some knowledge of the Scripture" (Qur'ān 27:40) with Asaf ibn Berechya, who was a Levite, a poet, and one of Solomon's secretaries. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. V, pp. 235f. *Chronicles*, I, 6:24. Cf. Izutsu, pp. 210f.

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If the case is as we pointed out, then the time of its absence, I mean the absence of the throne from its place, is the time of its existence with Solomon, because of the repetition of creation by means of (God's) breaths.

One has no knowledge of this measure (of repetition of creation). Moreover, no one is aware that in himself with each breath one becomes nonexistent then (*thumma*) existent again. Do not say that the word "then" (*thumma*) requires a lapse of time – this is not correct. According to the Arabs, this word requires only (156) the precedence of a cause (to its effect) in specific circumstances, as the poet said: "Just as (you) throw the lance, then it trembles."[13] No doubt, the instant of throwing is the same instant it trembles. (The poet) uses the word "then," (although) no lapse of time occurs (between the throwing and the trembling). In like manner, the repetition of creation by breaths takes place; the moment of a thing's nonexistence is the same moment of the existence of its like, as with the repetition of the creation of accidents in the Ashʿarite theory.[14]

The existence of Bilqīs' throne (in Solomon's palace) is a (most) difficult matter, but only for one who does not know what we mentioned earlier regarding this story. Asaf's advantage in this matter was only (his responsibility for) the occurrence of recreation in Solomon's court. Whoever understands what we have said (knows) that the throne traveled no distance, that no land was contracted for it, and that it did not break through the earth. This act was carried out by one of Solomon's followers, so that Solomon would greatly (impress) those present (in his court), that is, Bilqīs and her entourage.

The reason for this (event) is that Solomon was God's gift to David, as the Qurʾānic verse states: "We gave (*wahabnā*) David Solomon" (Qurʾān 38:30). A gift (*hibba*) is one's bestowal of favor (*inʿām*), not because of an agreement or deservingness. This gift is a lavish favor, a strong argument, and a devastating blow.[15] As for Solomon's knowledge, God said: "We made him understand the case"[16] (Qurʾān 21:79), although Solomon's judgment contradicts David's. However, God "granted both of them judgment and knowledge" (ibid.). God made David acquire his knowledge from Him, while Solomon's knowledge on this matter came to him directly from God, for (actually) God was the judge. Solomon served as a transmitter of truth in an assembly of sincerity (*maqʿad*

13 This is a fragment of a line of poetry written by Abū Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Affīfi, II, p. 215.

14 The text here has the word *dalīl*, which literally means proof or sign. The Ashʿarites hold the recreation of the accidents, and in this manner Ibn al-ʿArabī's idea is reminiscent of theirs.

15 The last two phrases are directed toward Bilqīs' followers, who were confronted with the power of Solomon.

16 According to the Tradition, the case to which the Qurʾān alludes is David's trial of a shepherd whose flock of sheep entered a field and ruined its harvest. David judged that the flock should be transferred to the owner of the field to be his possession, while Solomon opined that the shepherd should repair the damage and until he does so, the owner of the land will enjoy the milk and the wool of the sheep. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, Vol. V, p. 576.

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ṣidq).[17] This issue resembles the case of an independent legist (*mujtahid*)[18] who reaches the correct legal decision, which God would have arrived at, had He taken it upon Himself, or the case of one who judges in accordance with the revelation to God's Messenger. In both cases the judge receives two rewards, while one who makes incorrect decision receives one reward, because, notwithstanding his fault, he uses knowledge and judgment. The Muḥammadan community was given the rank of judgment of both Solomon and David. How excellent a community it is!

(157) Although Bilqīs knew the great distance (between her palace and Solomon's) and the impossibility, in her view, of the throne's movement in so short a time, when she saw her throne, she said: "It looks like it" (Qurʾān 27:42, AH). She believed in what we have mentioned, that is, recreation by similars. It is it – the idea you are the same in the time of recreation as you were before is correct.

Solomon's perfect knowledge (is shown) in the Qurʾān's notice regarding his palace. "(Then) it was said to her: 'Enter the palace'" (ibid., 44). The palace was perfectly paved with smooth glass. "When she saw it, she thought it was a deep pool of water, and bared her legs" (ibid., AH) to prevent the water from reaching her dress. Solomon informed her that the throne which she saw is like this water. This is the utmost degree of justice, for he told her that she was right in saying "It looks like it" (ibid., 42). Then she said: "O my Lord, I have wronged myself, and I submitted myself with Solomon" (ibid., 44), that is, like Solomon, "to God, the Lord of all beings" (*ʿālamīn*)[19] (ibid.). She did not submit to Solomon, but rather to God, the Lord of all beings, because Solomon was one of the beings. In her submission, she did not bind herself (to Solomon), just as the messengers do not bind themselves (to people) in their belief in God, contrary to Pharaoh, who said: "The Lord of Moses and Aaron" (Qurʾān 7:122).[20] Even if Pharaoh's submission was somewhat similar to that expressed by Bilqīs, he was too weak (to submit to God); Bilqīs was more learned in her submission to God. Pharaoh was subject to the (event)[21] of this time when he said: "I believe in what the Children of Israel believe."[22] He singled out (his belief), because he saw the sorcerers saying concerning their belief in God: "The Lord of Moses and Aaron" (Qurʾān 7:122). Bilqīs' submission (*islām*) was identical to Solomon's, for she said, "with Solomon " (Qurʾān 27:44), then followed him in such a way that she believed in all Solomon's creeds, just as we walk

17 For this phrase, see Qurʾān 54:55.

18 This is a legist who formulates his legal decisions using the four roots of law (*Qurʾān*, *Sunna*, *Ijmāʿ*, and *Qiyās*) without blindly following human authorities or books.

19 For *ʿālamīn* see p. 37, n. 7 above.

20 Strangely enough, in the Qurʾān, Pharaoh's sorcerers said this as written in verses 121–122: "The sorcerers fell to their knees and said: 'We believe in the Lord of all beings, the Lord of Moses and Aaron.'" See also Qurʾān 26:47–48.

21 He said this when he was drowning with his troops.

22 This is a paraphrase of Qurʾān 10:90, which reads: "I believe there is no God except the One the Children of Israel believe in."

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on God's Straight Path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*),[23] because our forelocks are in His grasp. It is inconceivable that we should leave Him. We are with Him by being contained (in Him),[24] and He is with us, as it is clearly announced: "He is with you wherever you are" (Qurʾān 57:4). We are with Him, because He seizes our forelocks (158), and He is with Himself wherever He leads us on His Path. Everything in the cosmos is on the Straight Path, which was established (for it) by His Lord. This is what Bilqīs learned from Solomon and then said: "to God, the Lord of all beings" (Qurʾān 27:44). She did not single out one being to the exclusion of others.

As for the faculty of subjugation by which Solomon was distinguished and excelled others, and through which God granted him dominion which "no one else after him would achieve" (Qurʾān 38:35), it derived from Solomon's command. God said: "We subjected to his power the wind, which blows at his command" (Qurʾān 38:36). The fact that the wind is subjected to a human is not the issue here, for God's words include all of us, excluding none: "He subjects for you all that which is in the heavens and the earth" (Qurʾān 45:13). God mentioned the subjugation of the winds, the stars, and other things; however, this subjugation is not at our command, but at God's command. If you consider (the matter), He singled out Solomon, (granting him) only the power of command, with neither the faculty of concentration (*jamʿiyya*) nor of spiritual aspiration (*himma*). We say this, because we know that the terrestrial bodies are affected by the souls' spiritual aspirations if the latter are placed in the station of concentration.[25] We have examined this in the Way.[26] However, Solomon had only to utter the command to any entity he wanted to subject without spiritual aspiration or concentration.

Know, may God inspire us and you by His spirit, that if such a gift is bestowed on a servant, whoever he is, this does not diminish his dominion in the next world and nor does it harm his credit, though Solomon asked this from his Lord. Experience of the Way requires that God should give him in advance what He preserves for others in the world to come, and if God wishes, He will settle Solomon's account in the next world. God said to him, "This is Our gift" (Qurʾān 38:39), and he said, neither to you nor to others, "so bestow" (ibid.), that is, give "or withhold without settling an account" (ibid.). We know from experiencing the Way that Solomon's request of this (faculty) derived from God's command. If a request occurs at the divine command, the one who requests receives complete reward for his request. If the Lord wills, He fulfills the servant's need regarding what he asked of Him, and if He wills (159), He withholds (His response). That is because the servant

23 For this term, see the beginning of ch. 10.

24 *Bi'l-taḍmīn*. Kāshānī (p. 398) deduces this understanding from the word *ḍimna*, meaning in, within. Also, this phrase may express the idea that our existence in Him is concealed, that is, not written or articulated outwardly, while His staying with us is manifested in the Qurʾān.

25 That the soul affects the body is an idea developed by Ibn Sīnā. *Kitāb al-najāt*, pp. 196–205.

26 See pp. 127f of the Arabic text above.

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carried out what God obliged him; to wit, he obeyed his Lord's command concerning his request. Had his request come from himself and not as a reaction to his Lord's command, He would have settled his account with him. This (procedure) pervades all that is requested of God, as He said to His Prophet Muḥammad: "Say: 'O my Lord, increase my knowledge'" (Qurʿān 20:114). Hence, he obeyed his Lord's command, asking increase in knowledge to such an extent that when he was given milk, he interpreted it as knowledge, just as he interpreted his dream in which he saw himself receiving a cup of milk, which he drank, and the remainder he gave to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. They (his followers) asked him: "What is your interpretation of the milk?" He answered: "It is knowledge."[27] In like manner, when he was made to travel (*usriya bihi*) by night,[28] an angel brought him a vessel of milk and another of wine, and Muḥammad drank the milk. Then the angel said to him: You did the right thing according to your inborn trait (*fiṭra*); may God do the right thing by you for your community. Thus, when milk appears in a dream, it is an image of knowledge, which takes the form of milk, just as Jibrīl took the form of an ordinary human being before Maryam. For when Muḥammad said: "People are sleeping, and when they die, they wake up,"[29] he was calling attention to all that the human being sees in his life in this world as being like the dream of a sleeper, (that is), imagination which should be interpreted.

Being is only imagination/(but) in truth it is (also) reality
Whoever understands this/attains the mysteries of the Way

Thus, when milk was given to Muḥammad, he used to say: "God bless us by it and give us increase of it," because he saw the milk as an image of knowledge, and he was commanded to ask for an increase in knowledge. (However) when he was given something other than milk, he used to say: "God bless us by it and feed us by something better than this."[30] God will not settle His account with him whom God gives what He gives by a request done at a divine command, because of this request in the Hereafter. (But) whoever is given something by God because of his request made without God's command, it is for God to decide, as He wishes, whether to settle his account (160) or not. I hope God will not settle His account especially concerning knowledge, for His command to His Prophet to ask increase in knowledge is the same command to his community. That is because God said: "God's Messenger was a good model for you" (Qurʾān 33:21). What better model is there for one who learns from God? If we called attention to Solomon's station in its completeness, you would see something that would frighten you to know thoroughly, for most scholars of this Way did not know Solomon's state and position, and the matter is not as they maintained.

27 Ibn Ḥanbal, II: 83, 154; Bukhārī, I, 27 (82).
28 Qurʾān 17:1.
29 This dictum of the Prophet does not appear in the canonical collections of the Ḥadith but in Qurʾān commentaries and Sufi works. See, for example, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī* to Qurʾān 16:97.
30 Abū Dāwūd, XXV:21 (3730).

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17 The bezel of the wisdom of existence exists in the essence of David

(160) Know that since prophecy, I mean legislative prophecy (*nubuwwat al-tashrīʿ*), and messengerhood (*risāla*) are special divine (gifts), they are not acquired absolutely. God's gifts of this kind to them are not rewards for which they are asked to give (something in exchange). He gives them (gifts) through bestowing favors. God said: "And We gave him Isaac and Jacob" (Qurʾān 6:84), that is, to Abraham, the friend (of God). And about Job, God said: "We gave him his family and their like with them" (Qurʾān 38:43). And regarding Moses, He said: "Out of our Mercy We gave him his brother Aaron as a prophet" (Qurʾān 19:53), and other (verses) like that. What bestowed favors on them at the beginning is the same (entity) that bestowed favors on them in all or most of their states, and it is only His name the Bestower (*al-wahhāb*).

And He said concerning David: "We bestowed our favor on him" (Qurʾān 34:10) without connecting this favor to a reward He would ask in return from David, and without informing him that He gave the aforementioned favor as a reward. When God asked thanks for this act, He asked it from David's family; He did not mention David, so that his family would thank Him for the favor He bestowed on David. Regarding David, it was a gift of favor and beneficence, while regarding his family, it was not so, because He asked them to respond and said: "Thank God, family of David, for few of My servants are thankful" (Qurʾān 34:13). If the prophets (161) thanked God for the favors He bestowed on them, they did so not because God asked them to thank Him, but out of their own choice, just as God's Messenger stood thanking Him, until his legs became swollen, for He forgave him his earlier and later sins.[1] When someone said (something) to him concerning his behavior, he said: "Shall I not be a thankful person?"[2] God said about Noah: "Indeed, he was a thankful servant" (Qurʾān 17:3), because few of God's servants are so.

The first favor God bestowed on David was His giving him a name composed of disconnected letters, *dāl, alif*, and *wāw*. Thus, He severed his connections from the world, informing us about him purely by his name. However, God named (His

1 Qurʾān 48:2.
2 Bukhārī, XIX:6 (1130).

Prophet) Muḥammad by using both connected and disconnected letters in order on the one hand to connect Muḥammad to Him and on the other to separate him from the world. Hence, in his name, He combined the two states of Muḥammad, while these two states were internally expressed in David without God's establishing them in his name. This, that is, calling attention to his two states, was Muḥammad's special trait which David lacked. (And so) his personality (literally: his matter) became perfect in all aspects, just as it is in his name Aḥmad.[3] This derives from God's wisdom. Then He said, regarding David and His bestowing on him favors, that the mountains and the birds reverberated the praise of (God) with David's praising, so that their praises joined his.[4] God granted him power and described him by it, and granted him wisdom and decisive resolution (*faṣl al-khiṭāb*).[5] Then He (granted) him the greatest favor and nearness to Us[6] and stated specifically that the vicegerency belonged to him alone. God did not do this for any other human being, even if there were vicegerents among them. He said: "O David, We appointed you a vicegerent in the earth, so judge justly between people and do not follow your own will" (Qurʾān 38:26), that is, what comes to your mind when you judge without taking into account My inspiration, "lest this may lead you astray from (162) God's path" (ibid.), that is, the way revealed to My messengers. Then God treated David tenderly, saying: "Those who stray from God's path will be severely punished, because they forgot the Day of Reckoning" (ibid.). He did not say to him: "If you stray from My path, you will be severely punished."

If you say: "The vicegerency of Ādam was also appointed (in the Qurʾān)," we shall answer: "Ādam's appointment is not similar to David's, (because God only) said (it) to the angels: 'I am appointing a vicegerent in the earth' (Qurʾān 2:30), and He did not say: "I am appointing Ādam a vicegerent in the earth." Even if He had said so, it would not have been like His saying "We appointed you a vicegerent," regarding David, because the latter statement is definite and the former is not. The mention of Ādam after that in the story does not indicate that he was the vicegerent whom God appointed. Hence, pay attention to God's reports of His servants.

Likewise, regarding Abraham, the Friend, (God said): "I am appointing you a leader (*imām*) of people" (Qurʾān 2:124), and He did not say "vicegerent," even if we know that leadership (*imāma*) here means vicegerency (*khilāfa*). These (two concepts) are not the same, because He did not mention its (the leadership's) most specific name, which is vicegerency.[7] Regarding David, there is an additional element of particularization, because He appointed him a vicegerent of judgment that originates only from God, for He said to him: "Judge justly between people" (Qurʾān 38:26). However, Ādam's vicegerency was likely not of this degree.

3 Qurʾān 61:6.
4 This is an allusion to Qurʾān 21:79, 38:18–19.
5 Qurʾān 38:20.
6 Ibid., 25.
7 On the use of these two terms in Islamic theology, see my "Al-Ḳāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm's Theory of the Imamat," *Arabica* 34(1987):80–105.

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Rather it was the replacement of whoever lived in the earth before his time, not that he was a vicegerent of God among His creatures with divine judgment over them. Even if he actually was God's vicegerent, we are only talking about his appointment and its manifest form.

God has in the earth vicegerents who are the messengers. At present, vicegerency derives from the messengers and not from God. They judge only according to what the Messenger promulgated to them and do not violate his rules. However, here is a subtle issue, which only people like us know, that is, learning the judgments in keeping with the Messenger's legal way.

The Messenger's vicegerent is the one who learns judgments from the transmitted traditions (from the Messenger) (163), or by applying the method of personal efforts (*ijtihād*), (the authority of) which is also transmitted from the Messenger. Among us are some who learn from God, hence they are God's vicegerents through the same criterion, and the content (of the rules) they receive is the same as that which the Messenger received from God. Thus, seen outwardly, they are followed by others, because they do not contradict the Messenger's judgment, like Jesus when he will come down and judge and like Muḥammad in God's saying: "Those are the people whom God has guided, so follow their guidance" (Qur'ān 6:90). Concerning what he knows about the way of learning, the follower is distinguished and successful, and he is like the Prophet, who followed the messengers who preceded him. So we follow him, because he established the rule of following the preceding messengers, and not because of the rules of the messengers who preceded him. In like manner, the vicegerent's learning from God is the same as the Messenger's learning from God. Speaking from the perspective of revelation, he is God's vicegerent, and with respect to the outward realm, he is the Messenger's vicegerent. For this reason, the Messenger died without appointing a vicegerent. He did not appoint a vicegerent, knowing that in his community was one who would take the vicegerency from his Lord. Thus, he would be a vicegerent of God accepting the existing laws. Since Muḥammad knew of this (notion), he did not prevent its application. Among His creatures, God has vicegerents who took from the Messenger and the messengers the authority that the messengers had taken (from God). The vicegerents know the preceding Messenger's superiority, because the Messenger received increase (in knowledge), while the vicegerent does not receive such an increase, which he would have received, had he had been a messenger. The vicegerent gives only knowledge and judgments which were specifically given to the Messenger. Hence, outwardly, contrary to the Messenger, he follows the latter and does not oppose him.

Do you not see Jesus' (conduct)? The Jews thought well of Jesus when he did not promulgate laws which Moses had not promulgated; as we have said concerning the vicegerency today in relation to the Messenger, they believed in him and confirmed (his position as vicegerent) (164). However, when he added (a new) judgment or abrogated a judgment brought by Moses, because Jesus was a messenger, they did not tolerate this, for he opposed their belief in Moses. The Jews did not know the matter as it was and wished to kill Jesus. Of what happened to him, God informs us in His Noble Book about him and them. Since he was a

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messenger, he was allowed to change[8] (his religion), either by omission (*naqṣ*) of an existing rule or by adding a new one. However, without a doubt, omission of a rule implies adding a new rule.

The vicegerency today does not have the same status as it once had; it omits or adds rules which were promulgated by personal efforts (*ijtihād*), (but) not (the kind of) rules promulgated by Muḥammad. Sometimes a vicegerent seems to contradict a legal tradition, and as a result, one imagines that this contradiction derives from *ijtihād*, but this is not the case; rather, this tradition was not affirmed for this leader through revelation from the Prophet, and if it were affirmed, he would judge according to this rule. If the way this tradition was transmitted is from one honest person to another, such a person is not immune from fancy or transmission according to the meaning.[9] Such a thing might occur today to a vicegerent, as it occurred to Jesus, for when he will descend, he will cancel many rules promulgated through *ijtihād* and through this cancellation he will make clear the truth established by Muḥammad's laws, especially when the rules of religious leaders concerning an event contradict each other. We know for certain that if a revelation descended concerning an event it would guide to one solution, and this solution constitutes the divine law. In other cases, even if the Real affirms (a solution), it is a law which is affirmed to remove difficulty from this community and to spread (divine) laws in it.

As for Muḥammad's saying, "if two persons are acknowledged as vicegerents, kill the last of them,"[10] it applies to an external vicegerency which can be removed by sword. (165) Even if both agree, one must be killed, contrary to the spiritual vicegerency in which killing is forbidden.[11] Killing (of one vicegerent) takes place only in the external vicegerency. However, even if such a vicegerent does not have the position of the spiritual vicegerent, he is still the vicegerent of God's Messenger, if he behaves justly. The principle (of establishing one ruler) is a fundamental and it resembles the assumption of the existence of two gods (as God said): "If there had been in them (the heaven and the earth) gods except God, they would have been ruined"[12] (Qurʾān 21:22), even if they agree. However, we know by supposition that if two gods disagreed, the one whose judgment would be carried out is truly God, and the other whose judgment cannot be carried out is not God. Hence, we know that each judgment which is carried out in the world today is God's judgment, even if it opposes the external established judgment which is called law (*sharʿ*). No judgment except God's is workable, because the order which takes place in the world

8 The text has *ziyāda* (addition), which seems to me inappropriate.

9 Does Ibn al-ʿArabī mean by this phrase that the transmitter changes the content of the tradition according to his own understanding and not according to what was transmitted to him?

10 Muslim, XV, 61 (1853).

11 Literally: in which there is no killing.

12 This verse serves Muslim theologians, both rationalists and traditionalists, to corroborate the argument from assumed mutual prevention. Abrahamov, *al-Ḳāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm*, p. 190, n. 89.

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complies with divine will (*al-mashīʾa al-ilāhiyya*),[13] not with established law, even if its establishment derives from God's will. For this reason, the establishment of a judgment takes place in a particular way, for the will is concerned only with the establishment, not with the fulfillment of the judgment.

The rule of the will is great, hence Abū Ṭālib (al-Makkī)[14] named it the Throne of the Essence, because it is the Essence which requires judgment. Everything in existence occurs or not only through God's will, for if God's command is disobeyed – called here a transgression (*maʿṣiya*) – it is not God's creative command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*) (which is disobeyed) but rather a command addressed to people indirectly (through angels or prophets). No one can disobey in all one's actions the command of the divine will. If there is disobedience, it is of the indirect command. So, understand it! The will of God only applies to the bringing of the action into existence and not to its agent, hence it is inconceivable that it would not exist.[15] However, in this specific substrate (the human being), sometimes this action constitutes a transgression of God's command and other times acceptance of and obedience to God's command. (166) Praise or blame follows in accordance with what happens. Since the matter in itself is as we have established, all people achieve happiness of different kinds. God expresses this station (saying) that "Mercy encompasses everything"[16] and that it precedes divine Wrath.[17] That which precedes is the first, and when the judgment of the latter follows, the first (that is, Mercy) judges it, because it precedes Wrath.[18] This is the meaning of "His Mercy precedes His Wrath," in order that the first will judge that which comes later, for the aim is Mercy and everything is going toward Mercy. The human being comes necessarily to Mercy leaving Wrath, and Mercy judges everyone who comes to it according to his state.

Whoever understands will witness what we say/if he does not, he will learn from us

There is nothing except what we have stated, so rely/on it and be in the same state as we are

13 Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes between essential divine free will (*mashīʾa*), which establishes every occurrence in the cosmos and cannot be rejected by human beings, and God's desire (*irāda*), which human beings can obey or disobey. Austin, p. 141. SPK, p. 389, n. 8.

14 Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996) is the author of the mystical treatise *Qūt al-qulūb*, which exerted much influence on the teachings of al-Ghazālī.

15 This idea that God creates the human act but not its modality is reminiscent of an interpretation of al-Ashʿarī's theory of acquisition (*kasb*), according to which it is the human being which assigns to the act its moral value. For example, if one enters a house and takes money from it, his act will be lawful if he enters his own house, but unlawful in case it is not his house. So the act itself is an objective entity which can be applied to different situations. Abrahamov, "A Re-Examination of al-Ashʿarī's Theory of Kasb according to K. al-lumaʿ, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1989):210–221.

16 Qurʾān 7:156.

17 Bukhārī, LIV:416 (7554).

18 This explanation seems awkward, because Ibn al-ʿArabī does not explain why that which comes first overcomes the latter.

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What we have told you comes from Him to us/and what we have given to you comes from us to you

As for the "softening of iron,"[19] (it is said) that hardened hearts[20] are softened by rebuke and threat as fire softens iron. However, the difficult thing is hearts that are harder than stone,[21] for fire breaks and calcifies the stone but does not soften it. God softened iron for him so that he could make shields, and (in this act) He called his attention to (the notion) that what attacks you, that is, spears, swords, knives, and arrowheads, are made of the iron from which you make shields. So you protect yourself from iron with iron. The Muḥammadan religion sets forth (the rule): "I seek refuge from You in You."[22] So understand! Thus, this is the spirit of softening iron, for God is both the Avenger and the All-Compassionate, and He gives us success.

19 "We softened iron for him" (David – Qur'ān 34:10).
20 Qur'ān 39:22.
21 Cf. Qur'ān 2:74.
22 Cf. Qur'ān 19:18.

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18 The bezel of the wisdom of breath[1] exists in the essence of Jonah

(167) Know that this human formation in its totality, (that is), spirit, body, and soul, was created by God in His image. Only God, who created this structure, can be responsible for its disintegration, whether by His hand or by His command, which is always the case.[2] Whoever engages in the disintegration of the human structure without receiving God's command wrongs himself, transgresses God's law regarding the human being, and strives to ruin whom God orders to protect his life. Know that feeling pity for God's servants and caring for them are more deserving than jealousy of God.[3]

David wanted to build the Holy House and built it several times.[4] However, each time he completed the building, it was ruined. He complained of this to God, who revealed to him: "My House will not be built by one who has shed blood." Then David said: "O my Lord, was this act (of shedding blood) not carried out for Your sake?" God said: "Indeed, but were they not My servants?" David said: "O my Lord, appoint for its building one of my family." Then God revealed to him: "Your son Solomon will build it."

The aim of this story is to preserve this human formation and (to show) that its keeping up is better than its destruction. Do you not see that God imposed poll tax and peace on the enemy of the religion in order to spare human life and said: "If they incline toward peace, incline to it yourself and trust in God" (Qurʾān 8:61)? Do you not see that the Law enjoins the avenger of blood, who is obliged to retaliate, to take ransom, or to forgive? But if the killer refuses, the avenger is allowed

1 Al-Qūnawī and following him al-Qaysarī reads here *ḥikma nafsiyya* (the wisdom of the soul) instead of *ḥikma nafasiyya* (the wisdom of the breath), claiming that the soul, as that which connects body and spirit, or the divine (*barzakh*, isthmus), is like Jonah, who cries out to God from the belly of the fish, just as the soul turns to God. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 31.

2 The last phrase stands between "by His hand" and "by His command." It cannot refer to both phrases, because of the alternative nature of the text, and because God creates by the command "be"; hence, I prefer to attach "which is always the case" to "by His command." This disorderly construction often characterizes the writing of our author.

3 Ibn al-ʿArabī refers here to killing people on account of religious motives, such as the killing of pagans.

4 I did not find the source of this information.

to execute him. God's decision may be seen in the following case: When the avengers of blood are a group and one of them is pleased with blood money or forgives the killer, while the rest only desire to kill him, the Law takes into consideration the one who forgives and his opinion preponderates the opinion of the others who do not forgive, and the wrongdoer will not be executed (168) as a retaliation. Do you not see the Prophet saying of the owner of the thong: "If the avenger of blood kills him, he will be like him"?[5] Do you not see Him saying: "Requital of an evil deed is an evil deed like it" (Qurʾān 42:40)? Thus, God made the punishment an evil deed, meaning that this act (of punishment) is wrong, notwithstanding its being lawful. "However, whoever forgives and makes peace (between people) will receive his reward from God" (Qurʾān, ibid.), because he was created in God's image. Whoever forgives and does not kill receives reward from God, who created him in His image, because he is most deserving the reward, for God created him for this purpose. God is manifested through the external name (*al-ism al-ẓāhir*), only through the human being's existence. Thus, whoever preserves his own existence preserves the Real.

The human being is not blamable because of his essence, but because of his action, and his action is not him, and we are speaking of his essence. Every action belongs to God, notwithstanding human acts are blameworthy and praiseworthy. God detests blame for the sake of blame. There is nothing blameworthy except that which religion considers so, for the religious blame derives from a rationale (*ḥikma*) known to God or to one God makes know, just as He enacted retribution for the benefit of preserving humanity and deterring one who transgresses God's laws. "In retribution there is life for you, O you wise people" (Qurʾān 2:179). These are people who know things as they really are (*ahl lubb al-shayʾ*)[6] and find the mystery of the divine and wise laws. If you know that God preserves this human formation and its persistence, you are most entitled to preserve it, for in that you attain felicity (*saʿāda*); as long as the human being is alive, it is hoped that he will attain the trait of perfection for which he was created. Whoever makes efforts to destroy a human being makes efforts to prevent him from reaching the aim for which he was created.

How good is what God's Messenger said: "Do I not tell you that which is better and more excellent for you than meeting your enemies and killing them and being killed by them? This is the remembrance of God."[7] That is because only the one who remembers God, a remembrance required of him, knows the value of this human formation, for God is the companion of the one who remembers Him, and the one who remembers witnesses (the existence) of the companion. When the one who remembers does not witness the Real, who is his companion, (169) he does not remember, for the remembrance of God permeates the whole structure of the servant, not only his tongue by which he remembers Him. That is because in

5 A person was found killed, and his thong was taken by the killer, who was identified by a relative of the dead person. When the relative wanted to execute the killer, the Prophet said this sentence. Muslim, XXVIII:32 (1680).

6 Literally: the people of the core of things.

7 Nasāʾī, XXV:24. Tafsīr al-Baghawī to Qurʾān 29:41.

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this time, the Real will be specifically the companion only of the tongue, and the tongue will see Him through that which it sees, not through that which the human beings see Him, that is, the sense of sight. Understand this mystery regarding the remembrance of the neglectful (*ghāfilīn*), for the part of the neglectful person which remembers God is present with God, and the remembered is his companion, because He sees him. The neglectful person with respect to his negligence does not remember, hence (God) is not the companion of the neglectful person.

The human being is (composed) of many parts and his essence is not one, while the Essence of the Real is one, but He is many through His names, just as the human being is many through his parts, and the remembrance derived from one part does not necessarily entail the remembrance of another part. Thus, the Real is the companion of the remembering part, while other parts are described as neglectful of remembering. There is necessarily a part in the human being through which he remembers, and the Real is the companion of that part, while the Real takes care of the other parts. The Real does not take upon Himself the destruction of this (human) formation through what is called death. Death is not annihilation (*iʿdām*), but only the separation (of the parts), meaning that the Real takes the human being to Himself (as God said:) "To Him all things go back" (Qurʾān 11:123).

When the Real takes the human being to Himself, He makes for him a composite formation, different from his present composite body, one appropriate for the kind of abode to which He transfers him.[8] This is an abode of eternal life, because of its temperance (*li-wujūd al-iʿtidāl*).[9] Hence, the human being will never die, meaning, his parts will never be separated.

As for the people of the Fire, they finally attain felicity, but in Hell, for the form of the Fire will become necessarily cool and safe for those who dwell in it at the end of their punishment period. This is their felicity. The felicity of the people of the Fire after exhausting the (sufferings) they deserve is like the felicity of God's friend (Abraham) when he was thrown into the fire. He suffered, because he saw it, and he knew from his past knowledge (170) that fire causes injury and pain to creatures which come near it. He did not know God's intention: what the fire was meant to impart to him. However, after experiencing these sufferings, he found the fire cool and safe,[10] though he still witnessed the color (of its flames flashing back at) him, for it was fire in the people's eyes.

One thing may appear in different forms in the eyes of the beholders. And so it is with the divine self-manifestation. If you wish, you can say that God manifests Himself like this thing, and if you wish, you can say that the cosmos is

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī seems here to make a concession to the philosophers who claim that the physical phenomena of the next world mentioned in the Qurʾān are just metaphors illustrating to the common people what they will encounter in the world to come. It is reminiscent of the view that in the world to come God will create a sixth sense by which people will be able to see Him. Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism*, pp. 17f, 130f.

9 In ancient times and the Middle Ages, medicine held the concept that temperance of the essential parts of the body guarantees its health. Often Ibn al-ʿArabī employs the theory of temperance. SPK, pp. 140, 351. See ch. 19, p. 133, n. 8, below.

10 Qurʾān 21:69.

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observed like the Real in His self-manifestation. In the eyes of the beholder, the cosmos takes on different forms accordant with the beholder's temperament, or his temperament differs with the various forms of the self-manifestation. All this is allowable concerning the realities (of the cosmos).

If a dead or killed person, whoever he may be, had died or had been killed and had not returned to God, then God would not have decreed the death of anyone or judged his killing. However, all is in God's grasp, for with respect to Him, no loss has occurred. He established killing as a law and decreed death, for He knows that his servant will not pass away, because he returns to Him as He said: "To Him all things go back" (Qur'ān 11:123), which means that He acts freely (with everything). Everything which comes out of Him is His Essence; moreover, His Ipseity is the essence of everything, and He gives everything its manifestation, as He said, "To Him all things go back" (ibid.).[11]

11 Loyal to his idea that the cosmos reflects God's names, our author cannot hold the passing away of human beings. Hence, after their death, they continue to live in a different form.

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19 The bezel of the wisdom of the unseen[1] exists in the essence of Job

(170) Know that the mystery of life permeates through water, since it is the root of the elements[2] and foundations (*ʿanāṣir*, *arkān*). For this reason God makes "of water every living thing" (Qurʾān 21:30). Everything in the cosmos is living, for everything celebrates God's praise;[3] however, we can understand this celebration only through divine unveiling (*kashf ilāhī*). Only a living being can praise. Hence everything is living. And the root of everything is water.

Do you not see the Throne, how it rests on the water,[4] because (171) it was composed of water; it floats on the water, and the water preserves it from beneath. Likewise, God created the human being as a servant and (then) he became haughty and wished to excel Him, but God, notwithstanding, preserved him from beneath, taking into account the seeming loftiness of the servant who is ignorant of himself. This is (illustrated in Muḥammad's tradition): "If you let a rope fall down, it will fall on God."[5] God alluded to His being both below and above in His saying: "They fear their Lord above them" (Qurʾān 16:50, trans. AH), and in His saying: "He is the High Master over His servants" (Qurʾān 6:18, 61). Thus, God possesses the high and the low positions.[6] For this reason, the six directions[7] are manifested only through the human being, who (was created) in the image of the Merciful.

There is no sustainer but God. He said regarding a group of people: "If they carried out (the precepts) of the Torah and the Gospel" (Qurʾān 5:66), then He said in an indefinite and general manner: "and what was sent down for them from their Lord" (ibid.). In this last sentence He included every law which was sent down to people through a messenger or inspired human beings. ("If they carried out . . . "), "they would eat from above" (ibid.), because He sustains from above, as is ascribed

1 According to al-Jandī, al-Kāshānī, and al-Qaysarī, all Job's states derived from the Unseen. Al-Qūnawī opines that Job had a special connection with the Unseen which enabled him to patiently endure his sufferings. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 32f.
2 The four elements.
3 Cf. Qurʾān17:44.
4 Cf. Qurʾān 11:7.
5 Tirmidhī, V:58 (3298).
6 The tradition quoted above indicates His low position, and the two verses His high position. Affifi, II, p. 235.
7 North, south, east, west, up, down.

to Him, "and from beneath their feet" (ibid.), and sustaining from beneath is (also) ascribed to Him by the medium of His Messenger who transmitted from Him.

If the Throne were not on the water, its existence would not be preserved, for the existence of the living is preserved through life. Do you not see that when the living dies a normal death, the parts of his formation are resolved and his faculties disappear from his unique bodily structure?

God said to Job: "Stamp your foot! This is a place to wash" (Qurʾān 38:42), meaning water, "cool" (ibid.), because of the extreme heat caused by his pain. Therefore, God calmed him with cool water. For this reason, (the core) of medicine is to decrease that which is increased and to increase that which is decreased, with the aim of achieving temperance,[8] which can be attained only approximately. We say "can be attained only approximately," that is, temperance, because the (divine) realities and witnesses[9] are eternally responsible for creation along with the (divine) breaths. Creation derives from an inclination in nature called deviation or decomposition. Regarding God, it is called will (172), which is an inclination toward a specific object of the will, and not to another. Temperance shows that all things are equal, but this is not the case in reality. Hence, we avoid (the use of) the rule of temperance.[10]

In the divine prophetic knowledge, the Real is described as content, angry, and (other) attributes. However, contentment nullifies anger and anger nullifies contentment, while temperance means the equality of anger and contentment. One who is angry with someone cannot be content with him at the same time, and vice versa. Such a person is characterized by one of the two traits (anger or contentment), which is an inclination. This statement is aimed at those who claim that God has not ceased to be angry at the people of the Fire. Consequently, they (the people of the Fire) do not enjoy God's contentment. Thus, our aim is valid. However, if the situation is as we have said, that is, the suffering of the people of the Fire is finally removed, even if they remain in the Fire, this is contentment, for God's anger disappears, because of the disappearance of suffering. That is because the essence of suffering is the essence of angry, if you understand. The one who is angry suffers, hence he tries to take revenge on the object of his anger by causing him suffering in order to gain relief by his act, and as a result his suffering passes to the object of his anger.

If you separate the Real from the cosmos, He is highly exalted above this quality according to this definition.[11] If, however, the Real is the Essence of the world, all the laws emerge from Him and in Him, which is (attested) in his saying: "All things return to Him" (Qurʾān 11:123) in reality and in revelation, and "hence, worship Him and trust Him" (ibid.), while He is veiled and hidden from you. This

8 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to the theory of the balance of the temperaments which prevailed in the medicine of the ancient times and the Middle Ages. F. Sanagustin, "Mizādj," E I2.

9 Possibly, here the realities and the witnesses stand for the fixed entities and the divine attributes, respectively.

10 He means to say that this rule cannot explain the existence and nature of God.

11 The author seems to say that God cannot be described as being angry like the human being. Speaking here of the aloofness of God from the cosmos means that in terrestrial language we consider God as avenger.

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is because there cannot be a world more wonderful than the present world (*laysa fi'l-imkān abdaʿ min hādha al-ʿālam*),[12] for it is in the image of the Merciful. God brought the world into existence; that is, His existence is manifested by the manifestation of the world, just as the human being is manifested by the existence of his natural form. We are His external form, while His Ipseity is the spirit which governs the form.[13] This governing is only in Him, just as it is from Him, for He is the First in essence, and the Last in form.

(173) He is the External through the changing of determinations (of things) and states, and He is the Internal through His governing (of the world), and He is the Knower of everything.[14] He is Witness to everything (Qurʾān 58:6, 85:9), knowing by witnessing and not by reflection. Such is true knowledge gained from mystical experience,[15] not by reflection, which amounts to guessing and conjecture, that in no way is knowledge.

Let us return to Job. He was given water to drink to remove the pain of his thirst, caused by the weariness and suffering inflicted upon him by the Devil.[16] (The weariness and suffering are metaphors) indicating remoteness from the perception of the realities as they really are. Through this perception he (Job) is near God. Everything witnessed is near to the eye, even if the object is far away. That is, sighting (something) makes contact with it, therefore by way of vision it is witness. If he could not see the object, he would not witness it, or the object would make contact with his eyesight in a certain way. This is the closeness between eyesight and its object. For this reason, Job alluded to affliction and attributed it to the Devil. Notwithstanding the nearness of affliction, he said: "He who is far away from me, but his judgment of me is near." Thus, you know that remoteness and closeness are relative values; they are relationships with no essential existence; however, they establish the remote and the close things.

Know that God's mystery exists in Job, of whom He made a lesson for us and a written book about him which this Muḥammadan community reads in order to know its content and to attach itself to its subject in honor of him.[17] God praised Job for his forbearance (*ṣabr*), notwithstanding Job's invocation to remove the injury from him. Thus, we know that when a servant invokes God to remove injury from him, this does not impair his forbearance and his excellence as a servant, for as God said, he "always turns to God" (Qurʾān 38:44), meaning, he directs himself to God, and not to causes. Concerning the removal of injury, the Real acts through a cause, because the servant relies on causes, for the causes which remove something are many, while the Causer is one

12 The source of this statement is al-Ghazālī, whose wording is somewhat different: "There cannot be a more wonderful entity than this" (*laysa fī'l-imkān abdaʿ mimmā kāna*). For the lengthy discussions in Islamic theology on al-Ghazālī's dictum, see Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over Al-Ghazālī's "Best of All Possible Worlds,"* Princeton 1984.

13 For God as governing the world, see Qurʾān 10:3, 31.

14 For the First, the Last, the External, the Internal, and the Knower, see Qurʾān 57:3.

15 Literally: taste, *dhawq*, pl. *adhwāq*).

16 "Bring to mind Our servant Job who cried to his Lord, 'Satan has afflicted me with weariness and suffering'" (Qurʾān 38:41, trans. AH).

17 Possibly Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to Qurʾān 38:41–44, in which Job is mentioned, because in Islamic culture there is no specific book on him.

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entity. The turning of the servant to the single entity which removes injury by a cause is better than turning to a specific cause, which might not coincide with God's knowledge of that cause. Consequently, the servant might say, "God does not (174) answer me," though he does not invoke God, but turns to a specific cause which neither the period nor the moment requires. Because Job was a prophet, he acted according to God's wisdom, because he knew that for the Sufis (*ṭā'ifa*) forbearance means restraining the soul from complaining; however, this is not our definition of forbearance.

The (true) definition is only restraining the soul from complaining to an entity other than God, not to God. The Sufis confined their approach to the idea that the one who complains impairs his contentment with God's decree (*al-riḍā bi'l-qaḍā'*). However, this is not so, because contentment with God's decree is not impaired by complaining to God or to another entity; however, what is impaired is the contentment with the thing decreed (*al-maqḍī*). We have not been addressed of the contentment with the thing decreed, because the injury lies in the thing decreed, not in the decree itself. Job knew that in restraining the soul from complaining to God to remove injury there is a resistance to God's compulsion, which amounts to ignorance of the person who does so. That is because (it is) God who puts him to test by causing him pain, hence he should invoke God to remove the painful thing. Moreover, in view of the verifier (*al-muḥaqqiq*), the one who suffers pain should beseech God and ask Him to remove his pain. For according to the gnostic, the one who experiences unveiling, the elimination of pain derives from God, because He describes Himself as "hurt" and said: "Those who hurt God and His Messenger" (Qur'ān 33:57). What hurt is greater than to test you when you are heedless of Him or of a divine station you do not know, so that you will turn to Him complaining and He, as a result, will remove your hurt? Then, your need of Him, which is your reality, becomes true, and the hurt of the Real is removed by your beseeching Him, when he removes it from you, because you are His external form.

This resembles (what happened to) one of the gnostics who suffered hunger and wept, and one of those who has no mystical experience censured him. The gnostic's response was: "He (God) made me hungry only to cause my weeping," meaning, He put me to test with suffering so that I would beseech Him to take away my suffering. "This in no way impairs my being forbearing." Thus, we know that forbearance is only restraining the soul from complaining to an entity other than God. By "other than God" I mean a specific aspect of God. God (*allāh*) established the Real (175) as a specific aspect of Himself called the aspect of Ipseity. So one should invoke Him using this aspect to alleviate an affliction and not to use other aspects called causes, which are identical to Him only with respect to particularizing God's aspects. When the gnostic beseeches His Ipseity in order to cure him of his affliction, he does not prevent himself from knowing that all causes constitute His essence and that each (cause) is a different aspect of Him.

This is a way to which only the Courteous[18] among God's servants cling. Those are the reliable servants who keep God's secrets, for God has reliable servants; only He knows who they are and they know each other. We have counseled you, so act accordingly, and ask Him!

18 God's courtesy (*adab*) is the rules He promulgated to people, and those who cling to them are called *udabā'*. SPK, p. 175.

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20 The bezel of the wisdom of the majesty[1] exists in the essence of John

(175) This is the wisdom of priority regarding names, for God named him Yaḥyā (he will live), meaning that the memory of Zakariah[2] will live through him. "We have chosen this name for no one before him" (Qurʾān 19:7). God joined the attribute which existed in the deceased, who left a son through whom his memory will live on, and the name He gave to the son. He named (Zakariah's son) Yaḥyā, and the name of the father will live on like experiential knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-dhawqī*).[3] Hence, Ādam's memory lived on in Seth, and Noah's in Shem (Sām), and this goes on with all the prophets. However, before John, God did not connect anyone's proper name with the attribute; however, he did so out of concern for Zakariah. This is because he said (to God): "Grant me from Yourself a successor" (Qurʾān 19:5), positing the Real before mentioning his son, just as Āsiya (Pharaoh's wife) gave precedence to the Neighbor (God) before the house (Paradise), saying: "(My Lord, build for me) a house near You in Paradise" (Qurʾān 66:11).

God honored him by fulfilling his need and naming his son with this attribute, so that his name would be a reminder to what His prophet Zakariah asked Him; that is, because Zakariah preferred the continued remembrance of God in his offspring, for the son is the mystery of his father. Hence, Zakariah said: "who will be my heir and be an heir of Jacob's family" (Qurʾān 19:6). Regarding them, what is inherited is only the station of the remembrance and invocation of God. Then He announced to him the peace which He bestowed on him the day (176) he was born, the day of his death, and the day he will be raised again to life.[4] God brought the attribute of life, which is his name, and informed Zakariah of granting peace to his son, and God's statement is true and certain.

1 As a person who inclined to sorrow and weeping, John represents some of the traits which pertain to God's majesty (*jalāl*) as against His beauty (*jamāl*), which contains, *inter alia*, gentleness and compassion. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 33.

2 Zakariah was John's father. Qurʾān 19:7.

3 By this comparison Ibn al-ʿArabī very probably means that just as experiential knowledge lives in one's memory after the termination of the experience, so the memory of Zakariah will last.

4 Qurʾān 19:15.

If the saying of the Spirit (Jesus), "Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I will die and the day I will be raised again to life" (Qurʾān 19:33), was the most perfect regarding unity, then the present saying (concerning John) was the most perfect regarding both unity and belief and foremost for nullifying incorrect interpretations. What was miraculous about Jesus was that he spoke (in the cradle),[5] for his intellect was perfect and enabled him to speak at the time God made him speak. The one who is able to speak, being in some state or another, does not necessarily speak the truth, contrary to the one who is the object of God's witness, like John. Considering this aspect, the peace God granted John is more valuable for reversing obscurity regarding God's providence than the peace Jesus granted himself, even though the circumstances in his case prove his proximity to God and his truth, for he spoke in the cradle in order to free his mother from the guilt (of fornication). This was one witness (of her innocence), and the other is the dry trunk of a palm tree which dropped fresh fruit without being fertilized by the male,[6] just as Mary (Maryam) gave birth to Jesus without a male and normal sexual intercourse.

If a prophet said, "My sign and miracle is that this wall will speak," and the wall says: "You are a liar, you are not God's messenger," the sign would be verified and it confirms his being God's messenger, and no attention should be paid to whatever the wall said.[7] Since there is a possibility of such an interpretation regarding Jesus' speech in the cradle as a result of his mother's allusion to it, the peace granted by God to John is more elevated in this respect.[8] The proof that he (Jesus) is God's servant is based on what was said about him being God's son. Those who believed in his prophecy knew that he was God's servant only through the proof of his speech. What remains is the increase of possible interpretations based on rational considerations; however, only the future will show his truth concerning all that he said in the cradle. Then, what we have alluded to will be ascertained.

5 Qurʾān 19:29.
6 Ibid., 19:23, 25.
7 The miracle is the wall's speech and not the content of it.
8 God's saying is more elevated than the miracle performed by Jesus in the cradle.

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21 The bezel of the wisdom of the dominion[1] exists in the essence of Zakariah

(177) Know that God's Mercy encompasses everything[2] that relates to existence and rule[3] and that the existence of His Wrath derives from His Mercy with His Wrath. His Mercy precedes His Wrath, meaning that the relation of Mercy to Him precedes the relation of Wrath to Him.[4] Since every essence has an existence which it seeks from God, His Mercy encompasses every essence, for with the Mercy by which He is Merciful He fulfills the essence's request to have existence and then brings it into existence. For this reason we said that God's Mercy encompasses everything with respect to existence and rule.

The divine names belong to the (genus of) things and they derive from one essence. The first thing God's Mercy encompassed was the thingness (*shayʾiyya*) of the essence which brought into existence Mercy through Mercy.[5] The first thing Mercy encompassed was itself, then its thingness, to which we have alluded, then the thingness of every existent which is brought into existence unendingly with respect to this world and the next, accidents and atoms (*jawhar wa-ʿaraḍ*), composed and simple things. No consideration is given to attaining an aim or concord in nature, but all the fitting and unfitting things are embraced in God's Mercy with respect to (their) existence.

We have mentioned in *The Meccan Revelation* (*al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*) that only the nonexistent exerts influence, not the existent, and if the existent exerts influence, it is as if it is nonexistent.[6] This is a strange knowledge and a rare issue known only to the people of imagination through experience (*dhawq*). As for those not influenced by imagination, they are far removed from this issue.

1 God gave Zakariah power, which affects his aspirations. Hence, this chapter is entitled according to Zakariah's unique characteristic. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 33f.
2 Qurʾān 7:156. See ch. 16.
3 God not only brings things into existence, but also has dominion over them, in that He compels them to behave in specific ways.
4 First of all, He should be qualified by Mercy, and then by Wrath.
5 Mercy as an existent has an essence which brings it into existence, and this existence must be created by Mercy itself, but with respect to essence and not to activity.
6 Ibn al-ʿArabī refers here to the act of the spirit and imagination which exerts influence on the coming of things into existence. *Futūḥāt*, Vol. I, pp. 141f (ch. 2, the last paragraph).

God's Mercy permeates (all) beings/existing in essences and entities

The position of Mercy is the highest if you know/through the evidence of discursive reasoning

(178) Everything mentioned by Mercy is happy, and there is nothing that is not mentioned by Mercy. The Mercy's mention of things amounts to bringing them into existence. Every existent is the object of Mercy. O God's friend, do not be veiled from perceiving what we have said because you have considered the afflictions people suffer and because you believe the torments of the next world will not cease to plague those people.

First you should know Mercy alone is bringing into existence, in general, for through Mercy torments are brought into existence. Also, Mercy exerts influence in two ways. Its first effect is on the essence, meaning it brings every existent essence into existence, without any regard for a specific aim or absence thereof, or for suitability or lacks of it, because it only heeds the essence of every existent before its existence. Moreover, it concerns itself with the thing (purely) as a fixed entity (*ʿayn thābita*). For this reason, it sees the god created in beliefs as one of the fixed entities, and hence has mercy[7] on it through bringing it into existence. Because of this, we said that the god created in beliefs is the first thing on which mercy is bestowed after Mercy bestows mercy on Itself, (when we refer to) its connection to the bringing of existents into existence. Another effect Mercy has is initiated by request. The veiled ones ask the Real to have mercy on them in their belief, while the people of revelation ask God's mercy to exist in them, and request it by God's name, saying: "O God, have mercy on us" (Qurʾān 23:109). The mercy that is shown to them is only the existence of mercy in them, which is the dominating principle (*ḥukm*) that exists in them, for the dominating principle is actually the accident that exists in the substrate (*al-maʿnā al-qāʾim biʾl-maḥall*). This accident is that which actually has mercy on them, for God has no mercy on His servants for whom He feels concern, only through (His attribute of) Mercy. When mercy exists in them they experientially find its dominating principle. When Mercy remembers a person, it has mercy on him. The active participle is both *raḥīm* and *rāḥim*. The dominating principle is not described as created, because it is an accident required by the essence (of Mercy).

The states (*aḥwāl*)[8] are neither existent nor nonexistent; that is, they have no concrete essence in existence, because they are relationships. (179) Concerning the dominating principle, they are not nonexistent, because the one possesses knowledge is called "the knower," which is a state. And a knower is an essence qualified by knowledge, yet the state of knowledge neither constitutes the essence of the knower nor the essence of knowledge. There is only knowledge and an essence in which knowledge exists. Being a knower means a state of essence that

7 Mercy with an uppercase letter indicates God's attribute, while the lowercase points to the action of this attribute, or the accident.

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī here employs two terms to designate first the accident (*maʿnā*, pl. *maʿānin*) and second the result of the accident (*ḥāl*, pl. *aḥwāl*).

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is qualified by the accident (of knowledge). The relationship between knowledge and its substrate is termed the knower.

Actually, Mercy is attributed to the Merciful, which means that Mercy entails the dominating principle and shows mercy. Whoever brings mercy into existence in the recipient does not do so to show mercy, but rather to bring it into existence to cause the recipient to have mercy.[9] God is not a substrate of accidents (*ḥawādith*), hence He is not a substrate in which mercy is brought into existence. However, He is the Merciful, and He is worthy of this quality only because Mercy exists in Him. Consequently, it is confirmed that He is identified with Mercy Itself.[10]

Whoever does not experience (literally: taste – *dhāqa*) this issue and has no part in it does not venture to say that God is identical with Mercy or with any other attribute, but he may say that He is neither this attribute nor other than it.[11] In his view, the Real's attributes are neither Himself nor other than Himself, for he cannot deny them or make them identical with His essence.[12] He inclines toward this expression, which is good; however, another expression is a more appropriate response to the question and may remove obstacles. This is the view which denies the realities of the attributes as existents in the essence of the qualified entity (the Real). They (the attributes) are only relationships and attributions between the qualified entity and their intelligible essences.

Even though Mercy is comprehensive, it differs relative to each divine name.[13] For this reason, God is requested to show His Mercy to people through every name. Hence, God's Mercy and the pronoun connected with it[14] encompass everything. Mercy has many branches, owing to the multiplicity of the divine names. However, when God is asked to have mercy on someone through a specific name, Mercy is not comprehensive regarding that name or another. Even regarding the name the Avenger, one who seeks revenge is allowed to say: "O Avenger, have Mercy on me." That is because these names refer to the Essence indicated, but through their real expressions they point (180) to different meanings.[15] By these names that exist in Mercy, one invokes (God) in their reference to the Essence which is indicated by

9 God wants people to be merciful, hence He brings Mercy into existence in them. Affifi, I, p. 179, n. 3.

10 Since God is not a body, He cannot be the recipient of accidents, and the only possibility to affirm His being the Merciful is to state that He and Mercy are one entity, just as His other attributes are related to Him. In holding this view, Ibn al-ʿArabī seems to have adopted Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf's (d. between 840 and 850) solution to the problem of God's attributes. According to Abū al-Hudhayl, the attributes are none but God. The attributes do not constitute separate spiritual entities within God, but are identified with His essence. Thus, God is Merciful by virtue of Mercy, which is Himself. H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Cambridge, MA 1970, pp. 225–232.

11 Strangely enough, Ibn al-ʿArabī ignores the fact mentioned in the preceding note. Did he not know that this is a Muʿtazilite approach acquired by the use of reason?

12 This is the view of Ibn Kullāb on God's attributes. J. van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb," EI2. See p. 309, n. 19 above.

13 Mercy acts through giving sustenance, through bestowing knowledge, etc. Kāshānī, p. 454.

14 By this the author means My Mercy (*raḥmatī*). Qurʾān 7:156.

15 One turns to God's essence, but in its capacity as Sustainer, Avenger, etc.

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a specific name and no other; one does not invoke the name which is different from other names (but God's Essence). (With respect to) its indicating of the Essence, a name does not differ from another, but it is distinct from another through its own characteristic, because it is a reality distinct from other names through its essence irrespective of any acceptable name referring to it, even though all the names are directed to show one Essence. There is no controversy that each name has its own rule which no other name possesses. This should be taken into account, just as one should take into account the notion that each name points to the indicated Essence. For this reason, Abū al-Qāsim ibn Qasī[16] said regarding the divine names that each separate name is named by all the other names; if you give a name priority by mentioning it, you depict it by all the names, because it points to one essence, even if there are many names for this essence and their realities are numerous.

Mercy can reach people in two ways. (The first is) the way of necessity, as He said: "I shall decree it for those who fear (God) and give alms" (Qurʾān 7:156), and (Mercy also includes) the theoretical and practical attributes by which He restricts them. The second way in which Mercy can reach people is by divine grace, which is not a reaction to the human being's act, and this is his saying: "My Mercy encompasses everything" (ibid.).[17] To this second way of Mercy refers the verse "so that God may forgive you your earlier and later sins" (Qurʾān 48:2) and the tradition "Do all you wish, for God has already forgiven you."[18] So know this!

16 He died in 1151. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 145–150.

17 This statement in Qurʾān 7:156 immediately follows the first statement and can be interpreted to mean that this first Mercy is the same Mercy that is given to the God-fearing. However, loyal to his doctrine, Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes between two kinds of Mercy. See ch. 16 above.

18 Ibn Ḥanbal, II: 492.

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22 The bezel of the wisdom of the intimacy[1] exists in the essence of Elias

(181) Eliās is Idrīs. He was a prophet before Noah, and God raised him "to a high position" (Qurʾān 19:57).[2] He dwells in the heart of the celestial spheres, that is, the sphere of the sun. Afterward, he was sent to a town named Baalbek; Baal is the name of an idol, and Bek is the ruler of this town. This idol called Baal was characterized as a ruler. Eliās, who is Idrīs, had a vision of the mountain named Lubnān, from *lubāna*, meaning a need, which was split open to reveal a fiery horse, all of whose organs were made of fire. When Eliās saw the horse, he mounted it and consequently passion left him, and he became an intellect without passion and with no connection to the intentions of the (lower) soul. In him the Real was transcendent, and hence he knew half the knowledge of God, for when the intellect learns the sciences governed only by speculation, it knows God only as transcendent, not as immanent. (But) when God gives the human being knowledge through revelation, his knowledge of God becomes perfect, thus he regards God as transcendent in one way and immanent in another and sees the permeation of the Real in natural and elemental forms, so that he sees the Real's Essence in their (the forms) essences.

This is the perfect knowledge which was brought by the religions God sent down, and through this knowledge all (kinds of) imagination have dominion over (human beings). For this reason, the power of imagination is stronger in this world than the power of the intellect, for whatever the intelligent person attains through his intellect, he is not free of the power of imagination over his objects of intellection. Imagination is the greatest power in this perfect human form, and the revealed religions brought it. The religions made God transcendent and immanent, likening Him (*shabbaha*) in His transcendence (*tanzīh*) through imagination and making Him transcendent (*nazzaha*) in His immanence (*tashbīh*) through the intellect. Each is connected with the other, so that (182) transcendence cannot be free of immanence, and vice versa. God said: "There is nothing like Him" (Qurʾān 42:11), thus making Himself transcendent and immanent, and "He is the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing" (ibid., trans. AH), thus making Himself immanent.

1 Intimacy is ascribed to Elias, because he became intimate with both angels and human beings. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 34.
2 See ch. 4 above.

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This is the greatest verse of transcendence ever sent down, even though it is not free of immanence because of the letter *kāf* (like).[3] He is therefore the greatest knower of Himself, and He expressed Himself only in the way we mentioned. Also He said: "Your Lord, the Lord of Might, is exalted above their description (of Him)" (Qurʾān 37:180). They describe God in terms of their rational perception. God placed Himself above their (perception) of His transcendence, because they limit Him by that transcendence, for their intellect is unable to perceive the (true) transcendence.

Then all religions brought (notions) dominated by imagination. They did not free the Real from any attribute through which He manifests Himself. All religions said and brought the same (ideas concerning God). The religious communities act accordingly and, as a result, God bestowed on them His self-manifestation, hence they adhered to God's messengers as God's inheritors, imitating what He said: "God knows best where to place His message" (Qurʾān 6:124, trans. AH). (The word) "God" in "God knows best" has two aspects: First, it is a predicate of God's messengers,[4] and second, it is a subject of "knows best where to place His message." The two aspects are true regarding God; therefore, we hold immanence in transcendence and vice versa.

After establishing this issue, we drop the veils and lower the curtains over the eyes of the critic and the believer, even though both are among the forms in which the Real manifests Himself. However, we are ordered to cover (their eyes), so that the differences in the predispositions of the forms may be manifested and so that (we may know) that the one who manifests Himself does so according to the predisposition of a certain form; its reality and inherent traits are necessarily attributed to Him. For example, one sees the Real in his sleep and does not deny his vision; this is undoubtedly the Real Himself. As a result, the inherent traits of this form and its realities through which the Real manifests Himself in sleep are attached (to this vision). After one wakes up, one can pass from that which one sees in sleep to something else which, according to the intellect, requires transcendence. If the person who interprets his vision possesses unveiling (*kashf*) and belief (*īmān*), he does not pass from the vision to transcendence alone, but gives both transcendence and the form appearing in sleep (= immanence) that which they deserve. (183) For God is actually an expression (to be interpreted) by one who understands allusions.

The spirit of this wisdom and its frame (*faṣṣ* – literally: bezel) lies in the division into that which affects (*muʾaththir*) and that which is affected (*muʾaththar*).

3 The exact translation of *ka-mithlihi* (like Him) is "like (*ka*) his simile," which means that God has simile, consequently He is not transcendent but immanent, although His simile is not like other similes. Hence, even the first part of the verse implies both transcendence and immanence. See pp. 38, 78 above.

4 In the verse indicated, the phrase "God's messengers" precedes the word "God," and thus God becomes the predicate of God's messengers. This signifies the identification of the messengers with God, an indication of immanence, whereas the second aspect indicates a distance between God and His messengers.

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These are two expressions, the first of which in every respect, in every state, and in every realm is God, and the second in every respect, in every state, and in every realm is the world. When this wisdom comes to you, attach everything to its appropriate source, for that which comes to you is necessarily and always a branch stemming from a root, just as the Divine Love derives from the human being's supererogatory acts. This is an affect (sign – *athar*) between that which affects and that which is affected, just as the Real is His servant's hearing, seeing, and power, which derive from this love. This is an established affect which cannot be denied, because religion proves it, if you are a believer. As for a sane individual, he is either one who experienced divine self-manifestation in a natural manifestation and knows what we are talking about, or a Muslim believer who trusts that which is documented in the Ṣaḥīḥ.[5] The imagination dominates necessarily the person who seeks that which the Real brought in this form, because he believes in it. As for the person who is not a believer, he governs his imagination through imagination, rationally thinking that he ascribes to God that which self-manifestation gives him in his vision, while his imaginings in this case do not leave him, for he is unaware of his negligence of himself. Concerning this, God said: "If you call on Me, I will answer you" (Qurʾān 40:60).[6] God said: "If My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I will answer the one who calls Me, when one does so" (Qurʾān 2:186), for He does not answer, unless there is one who calls Him, even though the one who calls and the one who answers are the same.

There is no controversy concerning the variety of forms. No doubt, they are twofold. All these forms are like Zayd's organs; it is known that Zayd is one individual reality, (however) his hand is other than the forms of his leg, head, eye, and eyebrow. He is many and one (at the same time), (184) many in forms and one in essence, just as the human being is no doubt one in essence. ʿAmr is undoubtedly distinct from Zayd, Khālid, and Jaʿfar, and the individuals of this single essence (humankind) are infinite in existence. Even though the human being is one in essence, he has many forms and (his essence exists in many) individuals.[7]

If you are a believer, you know for certain that God will manifest Himself on the Day of Resurrection in a specific form and will be known, then change His form and will be not known, then once again change his form and will be known; it is He, not other than He, who manifests Himself in every form. It is known that each form is distinct from another; it is as if the Single Essence is reflected in a mirror, and when the beholder looks at the mirror and sees the form of his God in belief, he knows and confirms it. If it happens that he sees the form of another

5 This term refers to the two collections of the traditions, al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's, and indicates their reliability. Here Ibn al-ʿArabī alludes to the tradition of the supererogatory works mentioned above.

6 Our author wishes to say that one should call on God and not be satisfied with his own intellect, which is deluded by his imagination. One believes that one rationally reasons, but actually is misled by fancies. Hence, one needs God's help.

7 For a possible influence of al-Ghazālī on the Greatest Master in this issue of the one and the many, see Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 121–124.

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God in belief, he will not know Him, just as one sees in the mirror his form and the form of another person. The mirror is a single essence, yet the beholder sees many forms in the mirror, which (itself) has no comprehensive form, though the mirror affects the forms in one aspect and not in another. It affects the forms through the reflection of different measures, such as smallness, largeness, tallness, and broadness, which go back to the mirror. The changes that take place in mirrors derive from their different measures. If you look, for example, at one mirror among these, you do not look at all of them, just as you look at God with respect to His Essence, because He does not need anything. (And if) you look at Him with respect to His names, it is as if you are looking at many mirrors. If your soul looks at a divine name, its reality appears in you. This is the idea, if you understand.

Do not worry and do not be afraid, because God loves bravery even in killing a snake, and the snake is only your soul. The snake is a snake because of itself in form and in reality. And a thing is not killed on its own. Even if you destroy the form in your sense perception, (185) its definition preserves it and the imagination does not remove it. If this is the case, then the essences are safe, strong, and protected (from damage), for you cannot destroy the definitions (of the essences). What strength is better than this? You can imagine that you killed (someone); however, through imagination and intellectual perception his form remains with its definition.[8] The proof of this (is): "You (Muḥammad) did not throw when you threw, but God threw" (Qurʾān 8:17). The eye of the beholder saw only Muḥammad's form, and the sense of sight affirmed it throwing. First, God denied the act of throwing, then He affirmed it ("when you threw"), and finally corrected (the first phrase) by saying that it is God who threw in Muḥammad's form.[9] One must believe in this. Consider this effective factor through which God appeared in the form of Muḥammad. God Himself, not one of us, informed His servants of this. His message is true, and belief in it is obligatory, whether you perceive the knowledge (in the message) or not, be you a learned person or Muslim believer.

What proves the weakness of intellectual speculation is the judgment of the intellect that a cause cannot be an effect of the thing for which it serves as a cause. This is clearly the judgment of the intellect. However, in the science of self-manifestation, a cause can be the effect of the thing for which it is a cause. The judgment of the intellect is right,[10] but its speculation must be revisited. The aim of this reconsideration is to say the following: After it was established that the Essence is one in many, then with respect to its being a cause of a certain effect in a certain form, it cannot be an effect of its effect in the state of its being a cause, but its aspect (of being a cause) changes when it moves in the forms, so that it

8 When one destroys a thing, one destroys its sensual existence; however, one cannot destroy a species, for example humankind, or the imaginable form of a thing.

9 In theological debates the verse cited serves to prove God's predetermination. See, for example, al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, part 15, p. 139.

10 With respect to the intellect, the procedure that a cause has an effect is correct. The question arises whether this procedure is suitable for explaining the phenomena in the cosmos.

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becomes an effect of its effect, so that its effect becomes a cause to it (the effect).[11] If one reconsiders things as they really are and does not stop at his rational thinking, one attains this aim. If such is the case regarding causality, what do you think about expanding rational speculation into other difficult realms?[12]

The messengers are the most intelligent people, and the message they brought (186) stemmed from the Divine Presence (*al-janāb al-ilāhī*).[13] They affirmed what the intellect affirmed and added what the intellect alone cannot perceive and what the intellect considers immediately as absurdity but acknowledges (it as true) after God's self-manifestation. When a person is alone, by himself, he is perplexed regarding what he has seen; if he is a servant of his Lord, he ascribes his intellect to Him, and if he is a servant of his own speculation, he ascribes the Real to the rule of the intellect. This is so only as long as he remains in this world, being veiled from the next world while in this life, for the gnostics outwardly appear here as if they were in the form of this world, because they are dominated by the rules of this world; however, no doubt, God transforms their outward appearance into the inward appearance of the next world. In their outward form they are known (really) only to those to whom God has revealed their insight so that they can perceive (the true nature of the gnostics). The gnostics are only those people who know the divine self-manifestation, because they possess the form of the next world. They are gathered (*ḥashr*) in this world for the Last Judgment and resurrected in their tombs, and they see what you cannot see, and witness what you cannot witness, because of God's Providence for some of His servants.

Whoever wishes to find this wisdom of Elias (who was) Idrīs, whom God twice brought into being – first, because he was a prophet before Noah, and then was raised up to heaven and then descended as a messenger, thus God joined for him the two positions (prophethood and mission) – must give up the domination of his intellect in favor of his desire. Then he will be a pure animal so that he can discover what every animal discovers, except the jinn and mankind (*al-thaqalāni*),[14] and so will realize his animality. Elias possessed two signs, the first being this discovery; he could see the one tormented in the grave and the one who was delighted therein, and he could see the dead alive, the dumb speaking, and the

11 Let us try to explain the last sentence. Since the cosmos is the reflection of God's Essence, which means that it exists in every form, and since the Essence is the cause of the cosmos, one can state that the Essence is both a cause and an effect. Also, with respect to a certain form, which contains as noted the essence, it is both a cause and an effect. Moreover, one can state that an effect, that is, a certain form, may produce another effect, thus being an effect of its effect.

12 If rational speculation fails in the basic principle of causality, which is the cornerstone of every investigation, how much more so when it is applied to other problematic issues. It is worth noting that Aristotle at the very beginning of his *Metaphysics* points out the importance of causation in science.

13 Chittick translates this phrase as the Divine Side. SPK, p. 39.

14 Literally: the two heavy ones. Qur'ān 55:31. Here Ibn al-Arabī expresses the idea that in order to receive revelation one must relinquish all his knowledge.

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sitting walking. The second sign is dumbness, for if he wished to speak of what he saw, he would be unable to do so; consequently, he would realize his animality.[15]

A student among us experienced such a revelation, but he did not become dumb, and so did not realize his animality. (But) when God placed me in this station, I fully realized my animality; I saw (things) and wished to speak (187) of what I had witnessed, but I could not, so there was no differentiating between me and the dumb, who cannot speak.

When an individual (like Elias) realizes what we have mentioned, he will be transformed into a state of pure intellect in an unnatural material, witness things that are the sources of the manifest natural forms, and know with intuitive knowledge (*ʿilm dhawqī*) from where this rule of the natural forms is manifested. If he experiences a revelation (which communicates to him) that nature is the same as the Breath of the Merciful, he will be given great benefit. If he is confined to what we have mentioned, this measure will suffice him to know what dominates his intellect. Then he will join the gnostics and know intuitively (the verse): "It was not you who killed them but God" (Qurʾān 8:17, trans. AH); only the iron and the striker and He who is behind these forms killed them. The killing and the throwing occurred by the joining of these elements, and in seeing things in their roots and forms, he thus completes his knowledge.[16] If he witness the Breath (of the Merciful), he is both complete and perfect (in his knowledge), because he sees only God as the essence of what he sees, thus identifying the seer and the object of seeing. This measure (of explanation) is enough, and God guides us to the right way.

15 Ibn al-ʿArabī argues that al-Ghazālī could not attain unveiling because he failed to erase from his heart the sciences he had learned. Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis,* pp. 131–133.

16 Meaning that his knowledge has all the elements needed, that is, the roots and the forms.

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23 The bezel of the wisdom of virtue[1] exists in the essence of Luqmān

(187) If God wills Himself to desire sustenance/then all of Being is His food
If He wills us to desire sustenance/He is the food as He wills
His will is His desire, then adhere to it/He wills it, and it is the object of his will
He desires both increase and decrease/and what He wills is the object of His will
This is the difference between them, then realize (it)/from another perspective, their essence is the same[2]

(188) God said: "We gave Luqmān wisdom" (Qurʾān 31:12), "and whoever is given wisdom, is given much good" (Qurʾān 2:269). Thus, in the Qurʾān, (that is), through God's witness, Luqmān possessed much good. Wisdom may be spoken or unspoken, as Luqmān said to his son: "My son, if even the weight of a mustard seed were hidden in a rock or anywhere in the heavens or earth, God would bring it (to light)" (Qurʾān 31:16). This is wisdom that is spoken, an act of God which He transmitted and affirmed in His Book; it is not ascribed to the one who utters it. However, unspoken wisdom is known by its circumstantial connections, for God neither spoke of the one to whom this seed was brought nor mentioned him, and Luqmān did not say to his son that God would bring it to him or to someone else. God spoke of this bringing in general, and placed the thing brought either in the heavens or on earth to call the thinker's attention to God's saying, "He is God in the heavens and the earth" (Qurʾān 6:3).

Through the spoken and the unspoken (content), Luqmān draws attention to (the idea) that the Real is the Essence of every known thing, for the known is more general than the thing, because (the Real) is most indefinite of all. Then he completed and exhausted the wisdom so that the cosmos (*nashʾa*) will be perfected by it and said: "God is the All-Subtle (*laṭīf*)" (Qurʾān 31:16). Owing to His grace

1 God gave Luqmān wisdom (Qurʾān 31:12), and the Qurʾān (2:269) connects wisdom with doing good or virtue. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," pp. 34f. All traditional scholars, except for ʿIkrima, regard Luqmān as a sage and not as a prophet. Notwithstanding, he appears in most books of *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets). E I2.

2 It seems that *mashīʾa* (will) is the essential will which cannot be changed, while *irāda* (desire) is usually embodied in God's prescriptions, which may be obeyed or not. See ch. 11 above. Here one cannot differentiate between the two terms.

(*luṭf*) and subtlety (*laṭāfa*), regarding the thing that is so named and so defined, He is its essence, so that of this thing it is said about it only what its name indicates through agreement and usage. Thus, one speaks of the heaven, the earth, the rock, the tree, the animal, the angel, the sustenance, and the food.

The essence of everything and in everything is one, just as the Ashʿarites said that the whole world takes the form of one substance, which is the core of our view, that the essence is one.[3] Then the Ashʿarites said that each thing varies by its accidents. This is also our view that things are different and multiply through forms and relationships, so that they are distinct from each other, and so one may say this thing is different from that thing with respect to its form or accident or temperament. You may say whatever you wish. Yet this is the same thing as that with respect to its substance; for this reason, (189) the same substance exists in each form and temperament. However, we say that substance is in fact the Real. But the speculative thinker (*mutakallim*) assumes that what is named substance, even though it is real, is not identified with the essence of the Real of which the people of revelation and self-manifestation speak. This is the wisdom of His being the All-Subtle (*laṭīf*).

Then he (Luqmān) described (God) as the All-Knowing (*khabīr*), meaning knowing through experience (*ikhtibār*, or putting something to the test). As He said: "We shall test you in order to know" (Qurʾān 47:31); and this (then) is knowledge through experience (*ʿilm al-adhwāq*). In spite of His knowledge of things as they really are, God made Himself acquire knowledge. We are incapable of denying what the Real determined about Himself, for He distinguished between experiential knowledge and unrestricted knowledge, because the former is limited by the (human) faculties. He said of Himself that He is the essence of His servant's faculties when he said: "I am his hearing,"[4] which is one of the servant's faculties, as well as His seeing, and His tongue, foot, and hand, which are the servant's organs. In His definition (of the human being), He did not limit Himself to the faculties alone, but also mentioned the human organs, for the servant is nothing but organs and faculties. Thus, the essence of what is named "the servant" is the Real. This does not imply the identification of the servant with the master, because the relationships (between the servant and God's names) are differentiated on account of themselves, while the essence to which they refer is not differentiated, because in all relationships only His Essence exists. This one essence (alone) combines all relationships, references, and attributes.

Part of Luqmān's complete wisdom in instructing his son is these two divine names which he brought forth in this verse, the All-Subtle and the All-Knowing, by which he named God. However, had Luqmān placed the two names in being, that is in existence, saying, "God is (*kāna*) (the All-Subtle, the All-Knowing),"

3 See p. 92, n. 28 above.
4 For this tradition, see ch. 1, n. 81.

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his wisdom would have been more complete and deeper.[5] God related Luqmān's utterance exactly as he said it, without adding anything to it, even though (190) the words "God is the All-Subtle, the All-Knowing" were God's words, for God knew that Luqmān would have completed his utterance with these words, had he concluded what he was saying.

As for His saying, "if even the weight of a mustard seed" (Qurʾān 31:16) for whom it is food, (the weight of a mustard seed) is only the atom, mentioned in His verses: "Whoever has done a speck's weight of good, will see it, and whoever has done a speck's weight of evil, will see it" (Qurʾān 99:7–8, trans. on the basis of AH). (Whoever eats this speck) is the smallest feeder, for the master seed is the smallest (speck of) food. If there had been a smaller particle, God would have produced it, as His verse says, "God does not shy away from giving an example of a gnat or something higher" (Qurʾān 2:26). Now, since He knew that nothing is smaller than a gnat, He said, "or something higher," meaning concerning smallness. This is God's saying here and also in Qurʾān 99. Know this, for we know that God does not restrict Himself to the weight of a speck, while there is something smaller than that, because He brought it forth for the purpose of exaggeration, and God knows best.

As for his forming a diminutive of his son's name (*bunayya*), it is a diminutive of mercy. Because of his mercy, he advised his son that if he acts properly, he will gain happiness. The wisdom of his advice lies in forbidding him from "attributing associates to God, for attributing associates to Him is a great evil" (Qurʾan 31:13). This evil refers to God's state of unity, because it describes Him as divided (into parts), while He is one Essence, and this is the utmost ignorance, because His Essence is His only associate.

The reason for this is that the person who does not possess the knowledge of things as they really are and of their reality does not know that when the Essence appears to him in different forms, this difference goes back to one essence, hence he makes each form an associate of the essence, and each form becomes a part of this essence. However, it is well known regarding an associate that what distinguishes it from that with which it is an associate is not the essence of another associate, because the other is distinguished by something else. (191) Consequently, really there is no associate, because among the things of which we say they are associates, each associate has a distinguishing element of its own. The reason for this (view) is general association. Even if it is general, the ability of each associate to freely act cancels its generality. "Say: 'Call on God, or call on the Merciful'" (Qurʾān 17:110).[6] This is the spirit of the subject (here discussed).

5 Probably by the addition of this verb, Ibn al-ʿArabī intends to say that God always, in the past, present, and future, knows and puts humans to the test, and that these traits are components of His fixed relationships with the cosmos. Kāshānī, p. 482.

6 According to this verse, there is no difference between God's names, because they are related to one essence.

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24 The bezel of the wisdom of leadership[1] exists in the essence of Aaron

(191) Know that Aaron's existence stemmed from the presence of divine Mercy (*raḥamūt*),[2] because God said: "We have bestowed on him," that is, on Moses, "out of Our Mercy, his brother Aaron as a prophet" (Qurʾān 19:53). His prophethood derived from the presence of divine Mercy, because he was older than Moses, nevertheless Moses was greater than him in prophethood. Since Aaron's prophethood derived from the presence of divine Mercy, he said to his brother Moses, "O son of my mother" (Qurʾān 20:94), calling on him by his mother, not by his father, because mercy is more fitted to the mother than to the father. Had the mother not possessed mercy, she would not have had the forbearance to rear children.

Then he (Aaron) said: "Do not seize my beard, nor my head (ibid.), and do not make my enemies gloat over me" (Qurʾān 7:150). All this is a breath of Mercy's breaths. The reason for this was that Moses did not look carefully at the tablets he threw down from his hands. Had he looked carefully at the tablets, he would have found in them guidance and mercy. Guidance is an explanation of the event that made Moses angry and of which Aaron was guiltless. Aaron found mercy in his brother's (behavior), because Moses did not seize Aaron's beard before the eyes of his people, taking into consideration his brother's older age. Aaron felt pity for Moses, because Aaron's prophethood derived from God's Mercy, and only mercy derives from His Mercy.

Thereafter Aaron said to Moses, "I was afraid you would say, 'You have caused division among the children of Israel'" (Qurʾān 20:94, trans. AH), thus making me the cause of their division, (192) for the worship of the calf divided them. Some of them worshiped the calf, following the Sāmirī[3] and imitating him, while some others abstained from worshipping it until Moses' return so that they could ask him about it. Aaron was afraid that Moses would attribute this sin to him. However, Moses knew the matter better than Aaron, because he knew of that which the people of the calf worshiped, and he also knew that God had decreed to worship only Him, and what God ordains will surely happen. Moses reproached

1 Leadership (*imāma*) is ascribed to Aaron, because he was appointed as a leader both by God and by his brother Moses. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 35.
2 This term is built on the pattern of *jabarūt* and *malakūt*.
3 See p. 104, n. 4 above.

his brother Aaron, because he denied that God's essence permeates everything.[4] That is because the gnostic sees the Real in everything; moreover, he regards Him as the essence of everything. Thus, Moses taught Aaron by granting him knowledge, even though Aaron was older than him.

For this reason, since Aaron said to Moses what he said, the latter returned to the Sāmirī, saying to him, "What was the matter with you, O Sāmirī?" (ibid., 95); that is, what did you make when you turned to the specific form of the calf? You made this form using the ornaments of the people until you deceived them because you took their property. Jesus (explained this phenomenon), saying: "O Children of Israel, the heart of every human being lies in the place of his property, thus, if you place your property in the heaven, your hearts will be there" (Matthew 6:21). Property (*māl*) is so called, because essentially the heart inclines (*tamīlu*) to it through worship.[5] This is the greatest aim admired by the heart, because of its desire for it.

Forms do not last, and the form of the calf would necessarily have perished, had not Moses hurried to burn it. His fervor overcame his nature and he burned the calf and scattered its ashes upon the sea. Thereafter, he said to the Sāmirī: "Look at your god" (Qurʾān 20:97). He called it a "god" in the manner of calling attention in order to teach, because he knew that the calf is one of God's manifestations. (He said), "I will surely burn it" (*lauḥariqannahu* – ibid.).[6] (Moses said this) because the animality of the human being can act freely over the animality of the animal, for God subjects animals to the human being (193), especially regarding a thing which is not an animal, which is more subject to the human being, because the inanimate things have no will and are controlled by that which acts freely over them without their being able to resist.

As for the animal, it possesses will and aim, and it can refuse to do some acts, and if it is able to manifest such a behavior, it can show defiant attitude toward what the human being wants from it. If the animal does not have the power (to resist), or if the (human wish) coincides with the aim of the animal, it obeys submissively to the human will. In like manner, the human being obeys a command, by which God raises him above others, because he hopes to attain some profit from his obedience. The profit is sometimes called reward, as He says: "We have raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may subject others" (Qurʾān 43:32, based on AH). Only because of his animality, not because of his humanity, is a human being subjugated to another human being, for the two similar persons are contraries (regarding humanity).[7] Whoever is higher than another in rank, because of property or honor, subjugates another by his humanity, and the latter is a subject of him by his fear or greed arising from his animality, not from

4 This sentence is translated in the light of the following one.

5 The noun *māl* derives from the root m.w.l., while the verb *tamīlu* stems from m.y.l. As usual, this does not prevent Ibn al-ʿArabī from connecting their meanings. See above, ch. 3, n. 20.

6 The text has *lanuḥarikannahu* (We will surely burn it).

7 Here we see once again one of the basic elements of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, that is, the consideration of a matter from two or more points of view. One can consider a human being from the point of view of his animality, that is, for example, his lower soul, and also from the point of view of his humanity, that is, his intellect and ethical behavior.

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his humanity. A person does not subjugate another who is like him. Do you not see animals stirring up each other because they are similar and the similar animals oppose each other? For this reason He said: "We have raised some of them above others in rank" (ibid.), and the one who subjugates differs in rank from the subjugated. Hence, subjugation occurs as a result of difference in rank.

Subjugation falls into two categories. First is the subjugation emanating from the subjugator's will to overcome the subjugated person, as the master subjugates the slave, even though both are human beings, and the ruler of his subjects, even though they are similar (in humanity) – (in both cases), subjugation occurs because of rank. The second is the subjugation deriving from circumstances, as when the subjects subjugate the ruler who takes care of them by defending them, fighting against (194) their enemies and safeguarding their property and souls. (In) all these acts the subjects subjugate the ruler because of their state, and this category is actually called the subjugation of rank, because the rank of the ruler determines this. Some kings work (only) in their own interests, while others know their role (literally: matter) and their rank of subjugation by their subjects. They (also) know the value and rights of their subjects. God rewards these (kings) as He rewards scholars who know things as they really are, and it is God's obligation to reward such people, because He takes care of His servants. In fact, the whole cosmos subjugates the One that cannot be called subjugated (God), (as) He said: "Every day He takes care of something" (Qurʾān 55:29).

Aaron could not deter the people from worshiping the calf and overcoming it as Moses did, because of God's wisdom which manifests itself in existence so that He should be worshipped in every form. When this form disappeared afterward, it disappeared only after it had been mixed with Divinity in the eyes of its worshipper. For this reason, every kind of thing is worshipped either as divine or as a subjugator. The intelligent person necessarily knows this. Nothing in the cosmos is worshiped unless its worshipper ascribes to it high value and elevated degree. For this reason the Real is called, for our sake, "The Elevated in degrees" (Qurʾān 40:15). He did not say "The Elevated in degree," for He multiplied the degrees in one essence. Thus, He decreed that only He should be worshiped in many various degrees, and that each degree embodies God's self-manifestation in which He is worshiped. The greatest and loftiest of the degrees in which He is worshiped is passion, as He said: "Have you seen him who has taken his passion to be his god?" (Qurʾān 45:23). It (passion) is the greatest object of worship, for only thanks to it everything can be worshiped, and it is worshiped only through its essence. Regarding this I say:

The essence of passion is that passion causes passion/had passion not been in the heart, passion would have not been worshiped

(195) Do you not see how perfect God's knowledge of things is, and how He completed (our knowledge) concerning him who worshiped his passion and took it to be his god, and said: "God led him astray (*aḍallahu*) knowingly" (ibid.), and going astray (*ḍalāla*) is confusion? That is because he (the Prophet) saw this person worshiping only his passion by obeying it. His passion ordered him to worship objects, so that even his worshiping God also derived from his passion,

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because had passion – which is will caused by love – not arisen in him regarding this sacred presence, he would neither have worshiped God nor preferred Him to other (objects). Likewise, whoever worships one of the forms of the world and takes it to be a god does not do this but through passion. The worshiper is always under the rule of his passion.

Also he sees that worshipers have different objects of worship, and one worshiper declares another who worships some other object to be an unbeliever. Whoever pays a little attention (to this phenomenon) is confused by the unity of passion, moreover its oneness, for it is the same phenomenon in each servant. For this reason, "God led him astray" (ibid.), that is, confused him, "knowing" (ibid.) that every worshiper venerates only his passion, making him a servant, whether he meets unexpectedly a religion or not.

The perfect knower (gnostic) is whoever regards every object of worship as a manifestation of God in which He is worshiped. For this reason, they all call every object of worship god (*ilāh*), although its specific name might be stone, tree, animal, human being, star, or angel. This is the particular name of each god. Divinity causes the worshiper to imagine that this is the object (literally: level – *martaba*) of his worship, while truly it is the manifestation of the Real in the perception of the worshiper who devotes himself to this object in its specific manifestation.

For this reason, some knowers expressed an ignorant view: "We only worship them because they bring us closer to God" (Qurʾān 39:3, AH), although they called them gods when they said: "Did he make the gods one god? This is an astonishing thing" (Qurʾān 38:5). They did not deny one god, but were astonished at this, (196) for they stuck to the multiplicity of forms and the relationship of divinity to them.[8] Then the Messenger came and called them to one God, who can be known but not witnessed by them. However, they affirmed Him and believed in Him, saying: "We only worship them because they bring us closer to God" (Qurʾān 39:3, AH), for they knew those forms are made of stone. For this reason, they were refuted by His saying: "Say (to those who ascribe partners to God), name them" (Qurʾān 13:33). However, they named them only because they knew these names have a reality.

As for those who knew things as they really are, they made known their denial of the forms which were worshiped, because their degree of knowledge taught them to be subject to the rule of the messenger through which they were called believers, instead of being subject to the rule of time. The polytheists are worshipers of time (*ʿubbād al-waqt*),[9] although they knew they did not worship the forms themselves, but only God in these forms, because they knew the rule of self-manifestation exists in the idols. The denier, who did not know the self-manifestation, was not aware of this (phenomenon), (while) the perfect knower,

8 The Arabs in the Jāhiliyya believed in one highest God, but associated him with three goddesses (*allāt*, *manāt*, *al-ʿuzzā*) who served as intercessors between god and the human beings. T. Fahd, "Ṣanam," E I2.

9 By this appellation, Ibn al-ʿArabī probably means those who do not know the essence of things, but only their external appearances in time.

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that is, the prophet, messenger, and inheritor (of prophet and messenger), concealed it from the people.

God ordered the people to leave these forms, for the messenger of the time left them, so that they would follow him, desiring God's love, by His saying: "If you love God, follow me, then God will love you" (Qur'ān 3:31). He called for God, who is aspired to and generally known, but not witnessed, (for) "Glances do not perceive Him" (Qur'ān 6:103), but "He perceives the glances" (ibid.), because of His subtlety and the permeation of the things themselves. Glances do not perceive Him, just as they do not perceive the human beings' spirits which direct the bodies and their external forms. "And He is the All-Subtle and All-Knowing (of experience)" (ibid.). Experience means tasting, and tasting is the self-manifestation that exists in forms. Both they and He are necessary, and the one who sees Him through one's passion necessarily worships Him, if you understand, "and it is incumbent on God to show the right way" (Qur'ān 16:9).

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25 The bezel of the wisdom of exaltation exists in the essence of Moses[1]

(197) The wisdom of (Pharaoh's) slaying the boys was destined to support Moses through the life of every slain boy, who was killed as if he were Moses. (In this act), there was no ignorance, for the life of every slain boy was necessarily returned to Moses. Each life was pure, because its inborn trait (*fiṭra*) of the primordial covenant of *balā*[2] was unimpaired by selfish aims. Moses was the combination of the lives of all the boys who were killed as if each one was Moses, hence, every spiritual predisposition of each slain boy inhered in Moses. God particularized Moses in an unprecedented manner, for he possessed many kinds of wisdom. I shall present successively, if God wills, some of these in this chapter in measure of the occurrence of the divine instruction (*amr ilāhī*)[3] in my thought.

The above notion was the first thing I was told (*shūfihtu bihi*)[4] in this chapter. When Moses was born, he was the sum of many spirits and active powers, because the small part (of the human being) acts on the large part. Do you not see how the infant, with his special trait, acts on the adult so that the latter comes down from his leading position and plays with the infant, rocking him and appearing before the infant as his equal in understanding? Thus, the adult becomes subject to the infant without being aware of it. Also, the child occupies the adult with his rearing, protection, looking after his interests, and making his life easy, so that he will not be anxious. All this pertains to the ways the younger acts on the older, because of the power of the child's state, for the child has been recently acquainted with his Lord, for he is closer to his birth (198), while the older is more distant from this acquaintance. Thus, whoever is nearer to God subordinates the one more distant from Him, just as by virtue of their closeness to the king, his highest officials subordinate those

1 For a partial discussion of this chapter, see Ronald L. Nettler, "Ibn ʿArabi and the Qurʾan: Some Passages Concerning Mūsa in the Fusūs al-hikam," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 20(1996):53–66.

2 Qurʾān 7:172.

3 Since Ibn al-ʿArabī was inspired to write this book and its content was dictated to him, it is advisable here to render *amr* as instruction, that is, what God taught him, and not a command.

4 The verb *shāfaha* means to speak mouth to mouth (face to face), and one can deduce from the use of this verb the notion of direct revelation to Ibn al-ʿArabī who only transmitted what he was told.

more remote from him. God's Messenger used to bare himself to the rain uncovering his head so that the rain touched him; then he said the reason is that the rain recently had contact with God. Think of the Prophet's knowledge of God – how exalted, high, and clear it is. The rain subjugates the best people, because of its proximity to its Lord; it was like a messenger who sends down inspiration to the Prophet calling him directly by his essence, and the Prophet bared himself to him to receive what he brought from the Lord. Had the Prophet not received a divine benefit from the touch of the rain, he would not have exposed himself to it.[5] Thus, this is the message of the water from which God made every living thing,[6] so understand!

As for the wisdom of putting him (Moses) in the ark (*tābūt*) and throwing him into the river,[7] (its meaning is the following): The ark alludes to his humanity, while the river is the symbol of the knowledge he attained through his body. Only via the body, composed of the four elements, can the human soul be supplied with the faculties of reasoning, sensation, and imagination. When the soul resides in the body and is ordered to act on and direct the body, God makes these faculties tools through which one can fulfill what God wants from him in directing his humanity (*tābūt*) in which God's presence (*sakīna*) inheres.[8] He was cast into the river in order to attain different kinds of knowledge through these faculties. God taught him that even though the spirit which directs him is his ruler, the spirit directs him through these faculties. God made these faculties, which reside in humanity (expressed through the *tābūt*), associate the human being through allusions and kinds of wisdom.

In like manner, God directs the cosmos; He allows it to direct itself by itself or by its form,[9] just as the existence of the child depends on his father's bringing him into existence (*ījād al-wālid*), the effects on their causes, the conditioned things on their conditions, the objects of knowledge on knowledge,[10] the notions that are proved on their proofs, and the unquestionable notions (199) on their truths. All these things pertain to the cosmos and this is God's direction of it; He let it direct itself by itself. As for our saying "by its form," meaning the form of the cosmos, I mean the Most Beautiful Names and the highest attributes through which God is named and described. We find the meaning and the spirit of each of His names by which He is named in the cosmos. Thus, He directs the cosmos only through its form.

For this reason, He said regarding the creation of Ādam, who is the model (*namūdhaj*)[11] that includes the qualities of the divine Presence, that is, the Essence,

5 Cf. Muslim, IX:13 (898).
6 Cf. for example, Qurʾān 21:30: "We made every living thing from the water" (trans. AH). Ebstein and Sviri, p. 250.
7 Cf. Qurʾān 20:39. In this verse the word *yamm* (literally: sea) appears.
8 On the notion that the *sakīna* resides in the *tābūt*, see Qurʾān 2:248.
9 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, everything is directed by the rules inherent in it and by God's names.
10 Read here *al-maʿlūmāt ʿalā ʿulūmihā* instead of *al-maʿlūlāt ʿalā ʿilalihā* (effects on their causes), which repeats what was already said.
11 For the use of this word instead of the word *barnāmaj* (plan) in Affifi's text, see Kāshānī, pp. 506f.

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the attributes and acts: "God created Ādam in His image."[12] His image is only the divine Presence. In this noble archetype, which is the Perfect Human Being, He brought into existence all the divine names and the realities that are brought forth from him in the macro-cosmos outside him. God made him (Ādam) the spirit of the cosmos and subordinated to him the high and the low things, because of his perfect form. Just as everything in the cosmos praises Him,[13] so everything in the cosmos is subordinated to this human being, because of the reality of his form. God said: "He has subjugated all that is in the heavens and the earth as a present for you" (Qurʾān 45:13). Thus, everything in the world is subject to the human being; the one who knows this is the perfect human being, while the human being who is like an animal does not know it.

Putting Moses in the ark and casting the ark into the river was an external form of destruction; however, from an inward perspective, it saved him from being killed. He lived just as the souls live because of knowledge, (escaping) the death of ignorance as God said: "Or whoever was a dead person" (Qurʾān 6:122), meaning because of ignorance, and "We restored him to life" (ibid.), meaning because of knowledge, and "We gave him light by which he can walk among people" (ibid.), meaning guidance (light), "Is this person like one who walks in darkness" (ibid.), meaning going astray, "unable to escape it" (ibid.), meaning that he can never be rightly guided, for going astray is inherent in his soul, and there is no other aim which can make him act otherwise.

Guidance means that the human being (200) is led to perplexity (*ḥayra*),[14] so that he knows that (divine) matter involves perplexity, and perplexity is anxiety and motion, and motion is life. Hence, there is neither rest nor death; there is only existence and (therefore) no nonexistence. In like manner God said, regarding the water by which the earth lives and moves: "It (the earth) quakes" (Qurʾān 22:5), and concerning the earth's pregnancy, He said: "(The earth) swells" (ibid.), and as for its giving birth, He said: "It brings forth every joyous pair" (ibid.). This means that the earth gives birth only to that which is like it, that is, natural like it. Pairing (*zawjiyya*, *shafʿiyya*) is the basis of what the earth gives birth and what appears from it.

Likewise, the existence of the Real (is attested) through the multiplicity of the cosmic phenomena and His many names, and the form of the world requires the realities of the divine names. Through the cosmic phenomena and their creator, the Unity of Manyness (*aḥadiyyat al-kathra*) is proved. (The Real) is One in His entity with respect to His Essence, just as the substance (*jawhar*) of primary matter is one with respect to its essence and many with respect to all the forms which appear through it and for which it serves as their substrate. Similarly, the Real is many, because of the forms of His self-manifestation; however, He is the manifestation of the cosmic forms, notwithstanding His intelligible Unity. Think how good is this divine instruction through which God particularizes whomsoever among His people He wishes him to learn (this idea).

12 Bukhārī, LXXIX: 1 (6227). See ch. 12, n. 23.
13 Cf. Qurʾān 17:44.
14 See ch. 3, n. 28, above.

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Since Pharaoh's family[15] found him in the river by the tree, Pharaoh called him Mūsā (Moses). In Coptic *mū* means water, and *sā* is a tree, thus he called him after the place where he found him, for the ark stopped at the tree in the river. Pharaoh wanted to kill him, but his wife – who was inspired by a divine speech (201) and whom God created for perfection, as the Prophet said about her when he acknowledged her and Maryam, the daughter of ʿImrān, as possessing perfection which (usually) pertains to males – said to her husband regarding Moses that he "is a delight for me and you" (Qurʾān 28:9). Thus, she was delighted by him through her perfection which was granted to her, as we said, and he (Moses) was a delight for Pharaoh through the belief God granted him as he was drowning.

God made him die when he was pure, immaculate, and free of evilness, because He put him to death being a believer before he acquired any sin. (Acceptance of) Islam erases what (one did) before.[16] God made it a sign of his providence for whomsoever He wishes, so that no one despairs of God's Mercy, "for only unbelievers despair of God's Mercy" (Qurʾān 12:87). If Pharaoh had been one of those who despair, he would not have hastened to believe in God.

As Pharaoh's wife said, Moses was a "delight for me and you . . . maybe he will benefit us" (Qurʾān 28:9). So it happened, for God benefited both of them through Moses even though they did not know that he was the prophet who would be responsible for the destruction of Pharaoh's kingdom and people. When God protected him from Pharaoh, "the heart of Moses' mother became empty" (ibid., 10) of the anxiety which had affected her. Then God prevented him from being suckled until he was brought to his mother's breast, and she suckled him and so God made her pleasure in him complete.

In like manner, God taught (humanity) the religions, as He said: "We have made a law (*shirʿatan*) and a path (*minhājan*) for each of you" (Qurʾān 5:48), meaning a way (*ṭarīq*). *Minhājan* means that from this way (*minhā*) each one came (*jāʾa*).[17] This statement makes an allusion to the sources (*aṣl*, literally: root) from which it came. This source (religion) is his sustenance, just as the branch of a tree is nourished only from its root.

What is prohibited in one law may be permitted in another, that is, with respect to the form. I mean (202) my saying that this is permitted.[18] Essentially, a thing is not the same as it was, because everything is created anew, and there is no repetition (in creation). We have (already) called your attention to this (notion).[19]

15 The Qurʾān (28:9) speaks of Pharaoh's wife, as it is written here below.

16 According to a doctrine of *muwāfāt*, the status of one's belief or unbelief is established before one's death. The human being, who becomes a believer before his death, is considered a believer throughout his whole life. For a thorough discussion of this doctrine, see Etan Kohlberg, "Muwāfāt Doctrines in Muslim Theology," *Studia Islamica* 57(1983):47–66.

17 The author divides the word *minhājan* into two words: *minhā* (from it, from the way) and *jāʾa* (each one came).

18 Ibn al-ʿArabī means that a thing is not permitted or forbidden by virtue of itself, but by God's command. Thus, things have no intrinsic nature.

19 Ibn al-ʿArabī here adopts the Ashʿarite doctrine of continuous creation. See pp. 91f.

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God refers to this (notion) regarding Moses when He forbade employing a wet nurse,[20] because his mother was really the woman who suckled him, not the woman who bore him. The mother, who bore him, did this as one who receives a trust; the child was produced in her and nourished by her menstrual blood. She did not will this, so that she was not indebted to him, for he was nourished, and if he were not nourished by what nourished him and the menstrual blood did not come from her, this would destroy her or make her ill. Hence, the mother was indebted to the fetus, because it was nourished by this blood and it protected her from injury, which she would experience, if this blood did not come from her and if her fetus was not nourished by it. The wet nurse is different, because by her suckling the child, the aim is to give him life and preserve it. God gave this advantage to Moses' mother, and no other woman enjoyed this advantage except his mother, so that she would be delighted in rearing him and seeing him grow at her bosom, "that she might not grieve" (Qurʾān 28:13).

God rescued him from the anxiety of the ark, and Moses broke the darkness of nature because God granted him divine knowledge even if he did not go beyond of it (nature). God subjected him to trials,[21] that is, put him to the test in many circumstances, so that he would realize patience in himself when God tempted him. The first trial God subjected him to was killing the Egyptian, for God inspired him to do this and made it fit his innermost part (his soul), even though Moses was unaware of this. However, he did not care to kill the Egyptian and did not wait to receive God's order to kill him, for the prophet is inwardly protected and is unaware (of it), until he prophesies, that is, is informed by God. For this reason, al-Khiḍr showed him the killing of the youth,[22] which Moses disowned, forgetting his killing of the Egyptian.

Then, al-Khiḍr said to Moses: "I did it not of my own bidding" (Qurʾān 18:82, trans. Arberry), calling Moses' attention to his (al-Khiḍr's) degree before he was informed that he was protected regarding this very event, even though he was not aware of this protection. Also he (al-Khiḍr) showed him making a hole in the vessel (and as a result its sinking), which outwardly was its destruction, while inwardly it was saved from being plundered. Al-Khiḍr made this (event) (203) correspond to Moses' ark, which was in the river. Outwardly it signified destruction, while inwardly deliverance. His mother did it, looking at Pharaoh out of fearing his violence, because he could slaughter him in order to cause her harm.[23] She did it with the help of God's inspiration, without having been aware of it. She felt in herself a desire to suckle him; however, when she feared for his safety, she cast him into the river, for the proverb says: "If the eye does not see, the heart does not grieve." She did not fear for him because of what she saw, or grieve for him upon looking at him. Probably she thought that God would restore him to her because she had a good opinion of Him. She lived with this thought in herself, as hope,

20 Qurʾān 28:12.
21 Qurʾān 20:40.
22 Qurʾān 18:74.
23 Read *ḍayran* (al-Kāshānī and al-Qayṣarī).

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fear, and despair were blended (in such a situation). For this reason, when she was inspired, she said: "Perhaps this is the messenger who will destroy Pharaoh and his people." She lived enjoying this fancy, and with respect to her, this assumption essentially amounted to knowledge.

Then, Moses was sought (by the Egyptians) and he came out of the city, escaping from (his persecutors), outwardly out of fear, but inwardly for love of deliverance. That is because movement is always caused by love, and the one who looks at movement is prevented from seeing this cause, for (he has in his mind) other causes, that are not (the real cause). This can be explained by the fact that the origin (of all things) is the movement of the cosmos from nonexistence, in which it resides, to existence. For this reason, it is said that the whole cosmos derives from movement after its being at rest.[24] Movement, which is the existence of the cosmos, derives from love. God's Messenger called (our) attention to this, saying: "I was a hidden and unknown treasure and (therefore) I loved (or wanted) to be known."[25] Had this love not existed, the cosmos itself would not have appeared. Its movement from nonexistence to existence derives from love which brings it into existence, and the cosmos too loves to see itself in concrete existence, as it saw itself in a hidden fixed state (*thubūt*). Hence, in every respect its movement from fixed nonexistence to existence derives from the love of both the Real and the cosmos, because (204) perfection is loved by virtue of itself (*al-kamāl maḥbūb li-dhātihi*).[26] And His knowledge of Himself with respect to His ability to dispense with (all) things belongs to Him (alone) by virtue of His essence *(huwa lahu bi-dhātihi*). What remains is only to complete the degree of knowledge through the knowledge of what comes into being (*al-ʿilm al-ḥādith*) based on the concrete entities, the entities of the world, when they exist (literally: are found – *wujidat*). The form of perfection is manifest through the knowledge of things that come into being and knowledge of the eternal things; the degree of knowledge becomes perfect through both aspects. The degrees of existence are perfected similarly, for existence is divided into the eternal and noneternal; the latter is what comes into being. The eternal is the existence of the Real by virtue of Himself, and the non-eternal is the existence of the Real in the form of the concrete (*thābit*) world. The non-eternal is called coming into being (*ḥudūth*), because parts of it appear to others, and appear in the form of the world. Thus, existence becomes perfect, and the movement of the world derives from love of perfection, so understand!

Do you not see how He relieves the constriction of the divine names[27] from the nonexistent manifestation of their effects in what is called the world? God loves

24 Very probably by this phrase (at rest), Ibn al-ʿArabī means the state of the cosmos as a thought God had before His self-manifestation took place.

25 The present tradition was considered spurious by the experts of Ḥadīth; hence, Ibn al-ʿArabī ascribed its authenticity to unveiling. SPK, p. 391, n. 14.

26 This notion is reminiscent of al-Ghazālī's theory of love in which the love of a thing because of its perfection is the most important cause of love. Abrahamov, *Divine Love*, pp. 46–50.

27 Cf. *Futūḥā*t, Vol. IV, p. 174. SPK, p. 130.

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ease, and He reaches it only through the existence of the forms, the highest and the lowest. Thus, it is proved that movement derives from love, and there is no movement in Being except that which stems from love.[28] Among the learned people some know this and some others are veiled from knowing it, because they consider the proximate cause which dominates their soul and makes them decide according to it.

Moses' fear because he killed the Egyptian was evident. (At the same time) this fear implied the will (love) of deliverance from being killed. (Outwardly) he escaped because he feared; however, inwardly he escaped because he willed (loved) to be rescued from Pharaoh and what he would do to him.[29] (The Qurʾān) mentions the evident and proximate cause, which was (in relation to the real cause), as the form of the body is to the human being. And the will (love) to be rescued was implicit in him, just as the spirit which directs the body is implicit in the body.

When the prophets turn to the people, they use external and general expressions and base their address on the understanding of the knower and the listener.[30] The messengers take into account only the common people, because they know the degree of their understanding, as the Prophet called attention to (205) this degree in the chapter of gifts and said: "I will give a gift to a man, even though another gift is dearer to me, for fear that God will throw him into the Fire."[31] Thus, he took into consideration the low-minded who are driven by greed and natural desires.

Thus, the knowledge the prophets brought was covered with a garment (*khilʿa*)[32] fitted to the lowest understanding, so that whoever cannot penetrate this cover would say how good is this garment and regard it as the last aim. However, the one who possesses subtle understanding and who dives to reach the pearls of wisdom, which he deserves to find, says: "This is a garment given by the king." Thereafter, he examines the value of this garment and its kind among other garments. He then realizes the value of the one on whom it was bestowed and finds a knowledge which others cannot attain, because they do not know the value of this garment.

Since the prophets, messengers, and (their) heirs knew that in the world and among peoples of the world there are such persons, they intended to express (their messages) in an outward understandable manner, one which both the common and the elite share. The elite person understands what the common people understand

28 For love as a cause of motion, see Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 192a. Very probably this notion goes back to Plato, *Symposium*, pp. 186–189. Abrahamov, *Divine Love*, p. 4.

29 "So Moses left the city, fearful and wary, and prayed, 'My Lord, save me from people who do wrong'" (Qurʾān 28:21).

30 Here Ibn al-ʿArabī follows the philosophers who claim that the Qurʾān expresses itself in a style which can be understood by the common people. Consequently, part of the Qurʾān, for example the descriptions of Paradise and Hell, should be interpreted metaphorically. Walbridge, *God and Logic*, p. 80.

31 Bukhārī, II, 19 (27).

32 The literal meaning of this word is "robe of honor." However, by this metaphor, our author means the outward cover of the prophets' statements that only the subtle scholar may penetrate.

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and more, thus he is rightly called one of the elite and through this additional understanding he distinguishes himself from the common people. For this reason, those who transmit knowledge are satisfied (with this state of affairs). This is the wisdom in Moses' saying: "I escaped from you out of fear" (Qur'ān 26:21); he did not say I fled from you out of love of safety and well-being.

Thereafter, he came to Madyan and found two maidens and "he watered (their flocks)" (Qur'ān 28:24) without (asking) payment, "then he turned to the shadow" (ibid.) of God and said: "My Lord, I need the good You sent down to me" (ibid.). Thus, he made his act of watering the same as the good God sent to him, and described himself as one in want of God regarding the good that is with Him.

Al-Khiḍr wished to build a wall without (asking) payment, and Moses reproved him for that.[33] (As a response) al-Khiḍr reminded him that he watered the flocks without asking payment and other things he did not mention, until Muḥammad wished that Moses would have been silent and not raised objections, so that God could tell him of Moses' and al-Khiḍr's affair. (206) Hence, Muḥammad would know through God's story the place to which Moses was led without his being aware of this. Had Moses known (the role of al-Khiḍr), he would not have disapproved of al-Khiḍr's deeds. God made al-Khiḍr's deeds true in the eyes of Moses, purified him, and led him to the right way. Notwithstanding, Moses ignored al-Khiḍr's purification and the condition the latter had laid down so that Moses could follow him.[34] This (story) will shed God's Mercy on us, if we forget God's (hidden aims).[35] Had Moses known (the hidden meanings of al-Khiḍr's acts), al-Khiḍr would not have said to him "(How could you have patience in) matters beyond your knowledge" (Qur'ān 18:68, trans. AH.)? By this al-Khiḍr meant: I attained knowledge through mystical experience (literally: taste – *dhawq*), which you (Moses) could not attain, just as you possessed knowledge which I could not attain. Thus, al-Khiḍr was just to Moses.

As for the wisdom in al-Khiḍr's separation from Moses, it is (reasoned) in God's saying: "Accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you" (Qur'ān 59:7, trans. AH). Those who know God and the value of the Message and the Messenger stop at these words. Since al-Khiḍr knew that Moses was God's messenger, he began to watch Moses' sayings, so that he might behave with good manners toward the messenger as he deserved. Then Moses said to him: "From now on, if I ask you something, do not follow me" (Qur'ān 18:76). Thus, he forbade al-Khiḍr to be in his company. When Moses reacted to al-Khiḍr's act the third time, al-Khiḍr said: "This is the separation between me and you" (ibid., 78). Moses did not say to him do not act, nor did he ask al-Khiḍr to stay in his company, because he knew the value of his position, which told him

33 Qur'ān 18:77.

34 Al-Khiḍr stipulated that Moses would not ask him about his acts until he would inform him. Qur'ān 18:70.

35 The author seems to say that whenever a human being does not understand God's acts, he should remind himself of the story about Moses, who did not realize the wisdom in al-Khiḍr's acts until he was informed.

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to forbid al-Khiḍr's company. Moses remained silent, and the separation took place.

Look at the perfection of the knowledge of these two persons. Moses maintained divine good manners and al-Khiḍr was just to Moses in acknowledging before Moses the (following): "I possessed knowledge which God taught me and you did not know, and you possessed knowledge which God taught you and I did not know." This announcement of al-Khiḍr regarding Moses constituted a remedy for the injury he caused Moses when he said: "How could you have patience about matters beyond your knowledge" (Qurʾān 18:68, trans. AH)? Al-Khiḍr said this though he knew the lofty position Moses held because of his mission and that he (al-Khiḍr) lacked such a position. This became manifest in the Muḥammadan community in the tradition of the pollination of the palm trees, concerning which Muḥammad told to his Companions: "You know best the interests of your worldly affairs."[36] No doubt, the knowledge of a thing is better than ignorance of it. For this reason, God praises Himself that "He (207) absolutely knows everything" (Qurʾān 29:62). Thus, Muḥammad admitted to his Companions that they are more cognizant of the worldly affairs than he, because he possessed no experience in these matters, for these things require experience and practice, and he did not find time to learn them, because he was engaged with more important things. In sum, I have called your attention to this important behavior which will benefit you if you use it.

God's saying: "My Lord bestowed on me authority (*ḥukm*)" (Qurʾān 26:21) means the vicegerency (*khilāfa*), "and made me one of the messengers" (ibid.) means the mission (*risāla*), for not every messenger is a vicegerent. Because the vicegerent fights with the sword, dismisses and appoints (officials), whereas the messenger is different, for he must transmit the message with which he is sent. If he fights for the message and protects it with the sword, he is (then) both a vicegerent and a messenger. Thus, just as not every prophet is a messenger,[37] so not every messenger is a vicegerent; that is, (not every messenger) is given kingship and the ability to handle it.

As for the rationale of Pharaoh's question regarding the divine essence,[38] it did not arise from ignorance, but from seeking information (*ikhtibār*), so that he could consider Moses' answer in the light of the latter's claim for God's mission. Pharaoh knew the messengers' degree of knowledge and he sought to prove by Moses' answer the truth of his claim. Pharaoh asked a question to let those present know – without being aware of (the nature of his question), as he was aware of it – (that Moses was ignorant). When Moses answered him as a learned person answers, Pharaoh showed, because he wished to preserve his position, that Moses had not answered him properly, so that those present came to know, because of their weak understanding that Pharaoh knew more than Moses. For this reason,

36 See p. 31 above.

37 For a theological and philological discussion of this point, see al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 153f.

38 "Pharaoh said: 'What is the Lord of all things?'" (*rabb al-ʿālamīn*). Qurʾān 26:23.

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since Moses answered what he did not need to answer – and outwardly it was not the answer to the question he was asked, and Pharaoh knew that he (Moses) would answer as he did – Pharaoh said to Moses' companions: "Your messenger who was sent to you is mad" (Qurʾān 26:27); that is, the knowledge I asked him about is concealed from him, for it is absolutely inconceivable that he should know. The question was legitimate, for asking (208) what-a-thing-is (*māhiyya*) is a question about the essence of what is sought, which must characterize the thing itself and no other. As for those who made definitions composed of genus and differentia (*jins wa-faṣl*),[39] (this procedure) applies to all things that are characterized by equivocality (*ishtirāk*). However, (God) who has no genus must have a specific essence not shared by others. Thus, the question is legitimate according to the people of truth, correct knowledge, and sound intellect, and Moses' answer to it is the only correct answer.

Here is a great mystery, for Moses actually answered one who had asked for an essential definition, and for this reason, he (Moses) made the essential definition his reference to the forms of the world through which God manifests Himself, or the forms of the world in which He is manifest. One can understand his answer to the question "'What is the Lord of all things?'" (*rabb al-ʿālamīn*) (Qurʾān 26:23), as if Moses said: "The one in which the high forms of the world are manifest, that is, the heaven, and the low (forms), that is, the earth, "if you know for certain" (ibid.), or He manifests Himself through them. When Pharaoh said to his companions "he is mad" (ibid., 27), as we said above, Moses added (a phrase) to his explanation, so that Pharaoh would know Moses' rank in divine knowledge, because Moses knew that Pharaoh would realize this. Thus, Moses said: "The Lord of the east and the west" (ibid., 28), conveying (the idea) of what is manifested and what is concealed,[40] that is, the outward (*ẓāhir*) and the inward (*bāṭin*), and "what is between them" (ibid.), and this is His saying, "(He) absolutely knows everything" (Qurʾān 29:62). "If you understand (*taʿqilūn*)" (Qurʾān 26:28), meaning if you are people who limit (*aṣḥāb taqyīd*), because the intellect (*ʿaql*) limits (*yuqayyidu*). Thus, the first answer (Qurʾān 26:24) is for the people who know for certain, that is, the people of unveiling (*kashf*) and finding (*wujūd*). He (Moses) said to him (Pharaoh): "If you know for certain" (ibid.), that is, (you) the people of unveiling and finding, for I have informed you of what you knew for certain in your witnessing and finding. If you do not belong to this kind, (that is), if you are people of limit, restriction, and restraint, I shall respond with the second answer. Also (you should know) that the Real (that you know) is according

39 "For Aristotle, a definition is 'an account which signifies what it is to be for something' (*logos ho to ti ên einai sêmainei*). The phrase 'what it is to be' and its variants are crucial: giving a definition is saying, of some existent thing, what it is, not simply specifying the meaning of a word." Robin Smith, "Aristotle's Logic," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/#Def. Each definition is composed of genus and differentia. For example, the definition of the term "human being" is an animal (genus), whose differentia is having the ability to reason.

40 The east is the direction of sunrise, hence it is the manifest thing, and the west is the direction of sunset, hence it is the concealed thing.

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to the proofs of your intellect. Moses brought these two aspects to light so that Pharaoh would know Moses' excellence and truthfulness. Moses knew that Pharaoh had known this, (209) or would know this, because Pharaoh asked about the essence, and he knew that his question was not based on the way of the ancient sages to ask "what," hence Moses answered as he did. Had he known something different, he would have regarded the question as an error. Since Moses identified the entity about which Pharaoh asked with the world, Pharaoh addressed him as he did, while the people (who were present) did not realize it.

Pharaoh said to Moses: "If you take a god other than me, I will place you among the prisoners (*masjūnīn*)" (Qur'ān 26:29). Now, the letter *sīn* in *al-sijn* (prison) is one of the redundant letters,[41] (hence) the meaning is "I shall conceal you," for you answered me in a manner that helped me express such a saying. If you say to me: "O Pharaoh, by threatening me, you act unknowingly, because the Essence is one, and how can you separate it?" I (Pharaoh) will say: "The ranks in existence separate the Essence, while the Essence, in principle, is not separated nor divided." "My rank" (Pharaoh continues), "is in actuality to dominate you, while I and you (are the same) through the Essence, but different in rank (in concrete existence)." When Moses understood Pharaoh's statement, he referred to what Pharaoh deserved, saying to him that he could not carry out (his threat). However, Pharaoh's rank attested to his ability to do this and to affect (Moses' state), for concerning Pharaoh's rank, the Real is the outward form that can dominate the rank of the form of Moses' appearance in this session.

Moses said, showing Pharaoh what can prevent him from attacking Moses: "Even if I show you something manifest?" (ibid., 30), to which Pharaoh could only say to Moses: "Bring it then, if you are truthful" (ibid., 31). (Pharaoh said this) for fear of appearing unjust and consequently one to be doubted in the eyes of his people, who were weak-minded. Pharaoh made those people unsteady,[42] and as a result they obeyed him "because they were wrongdoers" (Qur'ān 43:54); that is, through using their sane intellect, they did not deny Pharaoh's claim,[43] which was expressed in clear and intelligible language, (210) for the intellect cannot go beyond its limit. However, one who possesses unveiling and certainty can exceed this limit. For this reason, Moses answered in a way which could be accepted by both one who knows for certain and another who knows by using his intellect. "Then, he (Moses) cast his rod" (ibid., 32). This was the form of Pharaoh's transgression which was expressed in his refusal to respond to Moses' claim "and behold, it became a clearly seen snake" (ibid.), that is, a manifest snake. Thus,

41 In this case, the letters which remain are *j.n.*, and if one adds, as Ibn al-ʿArabī did, another *n*, one gets the verb *janna*, which means "he concealed." Kāshānī, p. 523. For kinds of etymology adduced by medieval Muslim scholars, see Ignatz Goldziher, *On the History of Grammar among the Arabs – An Essay in Literary History*, trans and ed. Kinga Dévényi and Tomas Ivanyi, Amsterdam 1994, ch. 5. I am grateful to Dr. Almog Kasher, who supplied me with this reference.

42 This rendering is based on Arberry's translation of Qur'ān 43:54.

43 Pharaoh claimed that he is a god.

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the disobedience, that is, the evil deed, became obedience, that is, good deed, as He said: "God will change their evil deeds into good deeds" (Qurʾān 25:70), that is, regarding his judgment.[44] Here the judgment appeared as a particular entity in one substance (*jawhar*), that is, the rod, which is (also) the snake and the manifest snake. As a snake, Moses' rod swallowed up the snakes, and as a rod, it swallowed up the rods. Thus, Moses' argument overcame Pharaoh's arguments in the form of rods, snakes, and ropes (*ḥabl*, pl. *ḥibāl*), and the magicians had ropes,[45] which Moses did not have. *Al-ḥabl* means (also) a small hill (*tall ṣaghīr*);[46] that is, their abilities in relation to Moses' abilities are like small hills to lofty mountains.

When the magicians saw that, they realized Moses' degree of knowledge and that what they saw could not derive from human capability. Even if it was in the power of a human being, it would only be one who is distinguished in his unquestionable knowledge and who is free of imagination and obscurity. Consequently, they believed in the Lord of all creatures, the Lord of Moses and Aaron, that is, the Lord Moses and Aaron called upon, because they understood that the people knew that Moses did not call upon Pharaoh. Since Pharaoh was the ruler of his time and the vicegerent wielding the sword, even if he deviated from the conventional laws, he said: "I am your loftiest Lord" (Qurʾān 79:24); that is, even if all are lords in some respect, I am higher than them, because, taking into account the external aspect, I was given dominion over you. Because the magicians realized truth in his words, they did not contradict him, and indeed agreed with him and said: "You can judge only the life of this world, (211) so judge as (you wish)" (Qurʾān 20:72),[47] for the state is yours. For this reason, his statement "I am your loftiest Lord" is true. Even though he was identified with the Real, the form was Pharaoh's. He cut off hands and feet and crucified (people)[48] through a true essence in false form in order to attain the ranks which are only attainable through such acts.

That is because in no way can causes be canceled, for the fixed entities (*aʿyān thābita*) require them. The fixed entities appear in existence in the same form as their existence in their state of fixity, for God's words (*kalimāt*) cannot be changed (*tabdīl*).[49] God's words are nothing but the entities of the existents; because of their permanence one ascribes them to eternity, and because of their (concrete) existence and appearance one ascribes to them coming into being (*ḥudūth*). As you can

44 The rod (*ʿaṣā*) stands for Pharaoh's transgression (*ʿiṣyān*) and the snake (*ḥayya*) for his obedience. Ibn al-ʿArabī exploits the same root *ʿ.ṣ.y* on which *ʿaṣā* and *ʿiṣyān* are built in order to connect the two words. He also claims that the *ḥayya* derives from *ḥayāt* (life) which, in turn, signifies knowledge which brings about obedience. One's act has no moral value without God's judgment, which permits or forbids. Hence, Pharaoh's act can change from transgression into obedience. Affīfi, I I, p. 313.

45 Qurʾān 26:44.

46 Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol. I, p. 505.

47 Ibn al-ʿArabī reversed the position of the two phrases of the verse which begins with "judge whatever . . . "

48 Qurʾān 26:49.

49 The last phrase is based on Qurʾān 6:115: "No one can change (*lā mubaddila*) His words" (trans. AH). See also Qurʾān 10:64.

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say, a person or a guest appeared in our (house) today; however, it does not follow from his appearance that he had no existence before his appearance (*ḥudūth*). For this reason, that is, the appearance of His words notwithstanding their eternity, God said in His venerable speech: "(Whenever) a new (*muḥdath*) reminder comes to them from their Lord, they listen to it while they play" (Qurʾān 21:2). "(Whenever) a new reminder comes to them from the Merciful, they deviate from it" (Qurʾān 26:5). And the Merciful comes only with mercy, and whoever deviates from God's Mercy may meet punishment, which derives from absence of mercy. As for His saying, "When they saw our injury (punishment), their belief would not benefit them, this was always God's way of treating His servants" (Qurʾān 40:85), "except for the people of Jonah" (Qurʾan 10:98). Because of the exception expressed in the second verse, the first verse does not prove that their belief will not benefit them in the next world. God wished to say that this exception does not absolve them of blame in this world, and for this reason Pharaoh was blamed, notwithstanding the existence of belief in him. This would have been correct, had he been certain of his death in this moment. The situation proves that he was not sure of his death, because he saw the believers walking on the dry land which became manifest, because Moses struck the sea with his rod. Because Pharaoh believed, he was not certain of his destruction, contrary (212) to the dying person, so that one cannot combine the two cases (of Pharaoh and the dying person).

Pharaoh believed in what the Children of Israel believed, that is, the indubitable belief in deliverance. Of that which did take place he was certain; however, not in the manner he wanted. God saved his soul from the punishment of the next world, and (also) saved his body, as He said: "Today we shall save only your corpse as a sign to all posterity" (Qurʾān 10:92, trans. AH), because had his form (corpse) disappeared, perhaps people would have said that he became hidden.[50] He appeared as a dead person, in the usual form, so that people would know that it was he. Thus, his deliverance combines both the tangible and spiritual aspects.

Whoever deserves the punishment of the Hereafter does not believe in it, even though every sign comes to him,[51] "until they see the painful punishment" (Qurʾān 10:97), that is, until they taste the punishment of the next world. Pharaoh did not belong to this kind of people. This is the plain meaning (*ẓāhir*) the Qurʾan conveys (to us). After that, we shall say further that God decides in this matter, because the common people had no doubt regarding his suffering (in the Hereafter); however, they had no text to support their claim in this issue. As for his family, their judgment is different, but here is not the place to discuss it.

Also, you should know that God does not cause persons who are dying to expire unless they believe and trust in the divine messages. For this reason, sudden death and killing an inadvertent person are detested. Sudden death is defined as (a state in which) the internal breath comes out, while the external breath does not enter. This is sudden death, which is not the state of the dying person. It is like

50 Very probably Ibn al-ʿArabī had in mind the Shiʿite concept of the occultation of the twelfth imam.

51 This phrase is based on Qurʾān 10:96.

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killing a heedless person by striking his neck from behind, while he is unaware. Thus, such a person dies in a state of either belief or unbelief. For this reason, the Prophet said: "He will be gathered in the state in which he dies,"[52] just as he will die in the state of (either belief or unbelief). However, the dying person is a witness (of God's messages), hence he believes as we have said, and he dies only in-the-state-in-which-he-is (*ʿalā mā kāna ʿalayhi*), for the verb *kāna* as a word designating existence entails time only when it is connected with circumstances. Hence, one should differentiate between the dying unbeliever and the unbeliever who is killed while being inadvertent or one who died suddenly, as we have said in the definition of sudden death.

As for the wisdom of God's self-manifestation and (His) speech (213) in the form of fire, it (happened) because Moses willed it. God manifested Himself in keeping with Moses' wish, so that he would accept the revelation and not deviate from it. Had He revealed Himself in a form different from Moses' desire, he would have deviated from God, because his interest was concentrated on a specific demand. Had he deviated, his act would have been fruitless and God would have turned away from him. However, he was the chosen and the favorite person. Because of that, God manifested Himself to him in keeping with his request, while he was unaware of this.

He saw this as the core of his need, like the fire of Moses/while it was God, and he did not know.

52 I could not find the source of this tradition. See n. 16 above.

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26 The bezel of the wisdom of recourse[1] exists in the essence of Khālid

(213) As for Khālid ibn Sinān's[2] wisdom, he manifested in his mission the prophecy of the Isthmus (*al-nubuwwa al-barzakhiyya*).[3] He claimed he wanted to inform (the people) of what exists in the Isthmus (*barzakh*) only after (his) death. Hence, he commanded that his tomb be uncovered in order to ask him. He related that things in the Isthmus are managed as life is in this world. Through this one can know that all that which the messengers have related in the present world is true.

Khālid intended that all the people would believe in the messages of the messengers so that mercy would apply to all. He had the honor to be a prophet before Muḥammad, and therefore he knew that God sent Muḥammad as a mercy to all the creatures. Khālid himself was not a messenger, hence he wished to attain a good deal of the mercy which existed in Muḥammad's mission. Khālid was not ordered to inform people, but he desired to achieve this in the Isthmus, so that he would be the most knowledgeable person regarding mankind. (But) Khālid's people did not carry out his order.[4] Muḥammad did not describe Khālid's people as getting lost (*ḍāʿa*), but as a people who destroyed their prophet, because they did not fulfill his wish.

Did God give him a reward for his desire? There is no doubt and no controversy that Khālid deserved to be rewarded for his desire; however, there is doubt and controversy regarding the reward which is demanded; does the reward for a

1 The wisdom of recourse (*ḥikma ṣamadiyya*) pertains to Khālid because, since his people opposed him, he asked them to have recourse to his grave one year after his passing away. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 36.

2 For this prophet, who lived one generation before Muḥammad, see ch. 2, Pellat, E I2.

3 "A *barzakh* is something that separates (*fāṣil*) two other things while never going to one side (*mutaṭarrif*), as, for example, the line that separates shadow from sunlight. God says: 'He let forth the two seas that meet together, between them a *barzakh* they do not overpass' (Koran 55:19); in other words, the one sea does not mix with the other." *Futūḥāt*, Vol. I, p. 459. Trans. SPK, pp. 117f.

4 According to al-Kāshānī (pp. 534f), Khālid saved his people from a fire that could have destroyed them. He went into a cave in order to extinguish the source of the fire. He asked his people on entering to call him after three days, so that he would not die after leaving the cave. But becoming impatient, they called him after two days, and this caused his death.

realized desire equal the reward for an unrealized (214) desire? In many instances the Law supports this equation. For example, one who comes to pray with a congregation, but the congregation does not attend, deserves a reward as if one attended the prayer. In like manner, one who wishes to do good deeds as rich people do, although one is poor, deserves their reward. However, does the equation apply to their intentions or to their acts, for the rich people combine intention and act? The Prophet did not determine either giving reward for both, or for one of the two. On the face of it (*al-ẓāhir*), intention and act are not equal. For this reason, Khālid ibn Sinān demanded (to carry out) the act of transmission of messages,[5] so that the position of joining the two activities (intention and act) would prove true for him and he would achieve the two rewards. And God knows best.

5 As Muḥammad did.

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27 The bezel of the wisdom of uniqueness[1] exists in the essence of Muḥammad

(214) His wisdom is unique, because he is the most perfect existent in mankind. For this reason, creation begins and ends with him.[2] He was a prophet when Ādam was between water and clay.[3] Also in his essential structure he is the Seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*).

The first of the uneven numbers is three,[4] and that which becomes greater than this first derives from it. He was the greatest proof of his Lord, for he was given all the words, that is, the things named by Ādam.[5] In his triplicity, he resembled this proof, which was a proof of himself. Since his essence was in keeping with the first uneven number, because his structure was based on three parts, he said in the chapter of love, which is the root of existents: "Three things have been made beloved to me in your world." (He said this) because of the triplicity in him, then he mentioned "women and perfume," and "the delight he was given in the prayer."[6] First he mentioned women and then prayer, because, (215) in the root of the appearance of her entity, the woman is a part of the man.

The human being's knowledge of himself (soul) precedes his knowledge of his Lord, because his knowledge of his Lord results from his knowledge of himself. For this reason, Muḥammad said: "Whoever knows himself (soul) knows his Lord."[7] If you wish, you may hold the impossibility of knowing (God) and the inability to reach this knowledge, and if you wish, you may hold the provability of this knowledge. According to the first (interpretation of the tradition) you cannot know yourself (soul), hence, you cannot know your Lord; and according

1 Muḥammad is unique because he was the first human being in which God's Essence was reified and because all God's self-manifestations exist in him. Chittick, "Chapter Headings," p. 37; idem, "Summary," p. 40.
2 No doubt Ibn al-ʿArabī here speaks of Muḥammad as possessing the *walāya* which, in our author's view, will not end. Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī contradicts himself. Affifi (Vol. II, p. 322) tries to solve this self-contradiction by saying that Ibn al-ʿArabī intends to say that existence began with Muḥammad and the mission (*risāla*) ended with him.
3 Bukhārī, LXXVIII:119.
4 Affifi, I, p. 115; SPK, p. 360. See p. 82, n. 3 above.
5 Qurʾān 2:31.
6 Nasāʾī, XXXVI:1 (3939).
7 See ch. 3, n. 4.

to the second, you can know yourself (soul), hence, you can know your Lord. Muḥammad was the clearest proof of his Lord, for every part of the cosmos is a proof of its root, which is God, so understand!

Women were made beloved to Muḥammad and he yearned for them, because this (behavior) pertains to the yearning of the whole for its part. Through this (behavior) Muḥammad made clear what God had ingrained in him, as God said regarding the essential human structure: "I breathed my spirit into him" (Qurʾān 15:29, trans. AH, and 38:72). Then God described Himself as most longing to meet humans and He said to those who longed for Him: "O Dāwūd, I am most longing for them,"[8] meaning for those who long for Him. This is a unique meeting, for He said in the tradition concerning the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*): "None of you will see his Lord, until he dies."[9] One necessarily longs for someone whose description is such. The Real longs for those who are near to Him, although He sees them; however, he wishes them to see Him, but their state precludes this (possibility). His statement resembles ("We shall test you) until We know" (Qurʾān 47:31), even though He knew (them).

He (God) longs for this unique trait (to meet humans), which takes place only after death, and through this trait He causes them to be cured of their longing for Him.[10] As God said in the tradition of hesitation, which is relevant to this issue: "I do not hesitate in whatever I do as much as I hesitate in causing the death of my believing servant, who hates death as much as I hate to injure him; however, he necessarily will meet Me."[11] He informed him of good tidings, and did not say to him that death is necessary, so that He would not grieve him by mentioning of death. (216) Since humans do not meet the Real until after they die, as the Prophet said: "None of you will see his Lord, until he dies," God said: "He necessarily will meet Me." The Real's longing for the existence of this relationship (is expressed in the following poem):

> The beloved yearns to see me/and I yearn for him very much
>
> Souls are impassioned (but) the human rejects the decree (of death)/I complain, moaning, and so does He

Since the Real has made it clear that He breathed His spirit into humans, He longs only for Himself. Do you not see that the Real created him in His image,[12] because he stems from His spirit? Since his structure is composed of the four elements in his body, which are called the humors, there comes into being out of His breath a

8 I do not know the source of this saying.
9 Muslim, LII:95 (169).
10 On the one hand, people wish to meet God, but on the other, they are afraid of meeting Him, because this involves death, and death causes their longing, which is like an illness, to be cured.
11 Bukhārī, LXXXI:38 (6502).
12 See ch. 25, n. 12.

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burning, despite the moisture in his body,[13] and as a result of which, the spirit of the human being became fire, because of his structure. For this reason, God only spoke to Moses only in the form of fire and placed his need in it.[14] Had his structure not been natural,[15] his spirit would have been of light. He called this act blowing, alluding to its derivation from the Merciful's breath, because by this breath, which is blowing, his essence appears, and because of the predisposition of the one blown into, the burning is fire, not light. The breath of the Merciful, through which human is human, is hidden in (the part of his structure).

From Ādam, God produced a figure in his image and called it woman, who appeared in his image, so that he yearned for her as a thing yearns for itself, and she yearned for him as a thing yearns for its source. Thus, women were made beloved to man, because God loved whomever He created in His image. Then He caused the angels that were made of light to prostrate themselves before Ādam, notwithstanding their great value and position and their high natural structure.[16] Because (God and humans share the same form), an affinity (*munāsaba*) binds them together, for form causes the greatest, the most exalted and perfect affinity.[17] Form (causes the creation of) pair; that is, it doubles the existence of the Real, just as through her existence, the woman doubles the man, thus producing a pair. Thus, a triad appears, (that is), the Real, the man, and the woman.

The man yearns for His Lord, who is his source, just as the woman yearns for him. His Lord made women beloved (217) to man, just as God loves whomever is made in His image. One feels love only for the entity which is the source of one's being, that is, the Real.[18] For this reason, he (the Prophet) said: "Women have been made beloved to me" (*ḥubbiba*), and not "I loved" from himself, because his love was connected to his Lord, in whose image he was created, even in his love for his wife, for he loved her through God's love for him, assimilating the divine love. Since a man loves a woman, he seeks union with her, which is the most profound union possible. And in the form of the elemental structure (of humans), there is no stronger union than sexual intercourse. For this reason, passion permeates all parts of the human. This permeation explains the command to perform major ablution, which encompasses all the human parts, just as a man is absorbed in a woman when passion takes place. (Another reason for major ablution) is God's jealousy of His servant lest he be delighted in other than Him, so He

13 Notwithstanding the word *bi-mā* (through which or by which), this is the only correct translation of the phrase *bi-mā fī jasadihi min al-ruṭūba*, because fire cannot derive from humidity or through it. Possibly something is incorrect in the text.

14 See ch. 25.

15 Read *law-lā* (Affifi, I, p. 216, n. 4), which seems logical.

16 Qur'ān 2:34.

17 In al-Ghazālī, affinity is one of the causes of love between the Divine and the human being. Both thinkers use in this context the same terms and tradition. Abrahamov, *Divine Love*, pp. 56–58.

18 The notion that God is beloved because He gives humans existence occurs in the *Futūḥāt* as one of the causes of love. Very probably Ibn al-ʿArabī follows parts of al-Ghazālī's theory of love. Abrahamov, "Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Love," pp. 14f.

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purifies him with major ablution in order to cause him to turn to God in the entity (woman) in which he is absorbed, for the woman reflects God.

When man witnesses the Real in a woman, it is a witness of passivity, and if he witnesses Him in himself, from the point of view of the appearance of the woman from him, it is a witness of activity.[19] However, when he witnesses the Real in himself without considering the form that comes from Him, his witness is of God's passivity without any mediator (such as a divine name). His witness of the Real in the woman is the most complete and perfect, because he witnesses the Real with respect to His being both passive and active,[20] and with respect to Himself, He is uniquely passive.

For this reason, the Prophet loved women, because of the perfect witness of God in them, for the Real is never witnessed without materials,[21] because in His Essence, He does not need the creatures. If witness of God's Essence is impossible, and witness of Him occurs only through material, then the witness of the Real in women is the greatest and the most perfect witness. The strongest union is sexual intercourse, which resembles God's turning to the one whom He created in His image in order to make him his vicegerent, so that He might see Himself (218) in him.

God made him, shaped his form, and blew His spirit into him, which is His breath, thus, externally his form attests to creation and internally to the truth (reality). For this reason, God describes the spirit as directing this (human) structure, because through it He "directs everything from the heaven" (Qurʾān 32:5), which is the height "to the earth" (ibid.), which is the lowest level, because it (the earth) is the lowest of all the elements.

He called them (the women) *nisāʾ*, a plural form which has no singular form deriving from the plural. Because of this Muḥammad said: "Three things have been made beloved to me in your world, women . . . " He did not say "woman," taking into account the fact that they were brought into existence after Ādam, for the word *nusʾa*[22] means postponement, (as) God said: "The month postponed (*al-nasīʾ*) is only an increase of unbelief" (Qurʾān 9:37). Selling by postponement (*nasīʾā*) means delay of payment. For this reason, he mentioned "women." He loved them only because of their being the (lowest) degree and of their being a substrate of passivity. Muḥammad was related to women as the Real is to nature. The Real reveals in nature the forms of the world through His will, which turns to

19 According to Ibn al-ʿArabī's logic, one can also see in man the two aspects of passivity and activity. Because God created man, he symbolizes the active aspect, and because man is a servant, he represents passivity.

20 That is because from one point of view the woman is passive, as she was created from the man, but from another she is active, because God created her. Alternatively, in the course of sexual relations, man is considered active and woman passive.

21 One can learn of God only through His connections to the world, because in Himself He is ineffable.

22 Ibn al-ʿArabī derives the word *nisāʾ* (women) from the root *n.s.ʾ.*; however, the origin of *nisāʾ* is *n.s.w*. As we know, such changes do not bother our author.

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the things (*al-tawajjuh al-irādī*),[23] and divine command, which amounts to sexual intercourse in the world of the elemental forms, to aspiration (*himma*) in the world of the luminous spirits and to the arrangement of premises (*muqaddimāt*) in the world of ideas in order to arrive at conclusions.[24] Each of these aspects (is symbolized) by the first and singular sexual union.

Whoever loves women by this definition, (his) love is divine. And whoever loves them in particular because of natural desire lacks the knowledge of this desire. Thus, (his love) is form without spirit, and even though that form essentially possesses spirit, it is not attested (as existent) for one who approaches his wife, or any other woman, only for the sake of pleasure, while he himself does not know to whom he approaches.[25] Thus, he does not know from himself (to whom he approaches), just as another person does not know this, unless he names with his own tongue (his aim), so that one can know it. Someone said:

"People rightly said of me that I am a lover/however, they do not know whom I love."

(219) Likewise, this person loved pleasure and loved the substrate in which it resides, that is, the woman; however, he missed the spirit of the issue. If he knew this, he would know the object of his delight and whoever delights in him, and (as a result) he would be the perfect individual.

Just as the rank of the woman is lower than the man's, as God said, "The rank of men is higher than that of women" (Qurʾān 2:228), so the rank of the human who was created in God's image is lower than that of He who produced him in His image, notwithstanding his being in His image. Because of His rank which distinguishes God from the human, He does not need the cosmos and He is the true Agent, while the human is a second-rank agent. The human does not have the priority of the Real. The (fixed) entities (*aʿyān*) are distinguished by a hierarchy, and God gives each that which it deserves and each gnostic his due.[26] For this reason, Muḥammad's love for women derived from divine love, (because) God "gave everything its (form of) creation (*khalqahu*)" (Qurʾān 20:50), which is the same as what everything deserves (*ḥaqq*). God gave him only what he deserved in keeping with the essence to which he was entitled. The Prophet gave precedence to women (in this tradition), because they are the substrate of passivity, just as nature precedes that which derives its existence from it through a form. Actually, nature is the Breath of the Merciful, for the forms of the higher and lower world are revealed in nature, because the blowing (of God's Breath) permeates the hylic substance (*al-jawhar al-hayūlānī*), particularly in the world of bodies. As for the permeation of God's Breath through the existence of the luminous spirits, this is another kind of permeation.

Also, in this tradition, Muḥammad advanced the feminine form above the masculine one, because he was concerned for women's well-being. Hence, he said

23 The text has *al-idārī*, which is clearly a misprint.
24 Cf. above, pp. 116f of the Arabic text.
25 He does not know the real aim of his love.
26 For this notion, see ch. 10 above.

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thalāth (three in the feminine gender) and not *thalātha* in the masculine, although he mentioned perfume, which is masculine. The Arabs used the masculine gender over the feminine and said (for example), "the Fāṭimas and Zayd went out" (*kharajū* – third-person masculine plural) and not *kharajna* (third-person feminine plural). Thus, they made the masculine gender, though Zayd was only one person (Zayd), overcome the feminine, though the Fāṭimas were a group (Fāṭimas). Muḥammad was an Arab (and so he adopted the linguistic norms of the Arabs). However, he took into consideration (220) the notion of God's intention to make women beloved to him, (although) he did not choose this love. God taught him what he did not know and bestowed on him abundant grace (*faḍl aẓīm*).[27] He made the feminine gender overcome the masculine by saying *thalāth* (three in feminine gender) without the addition of *hā'* (which makes the word masculine).[28] How cognizant was the Messenger of the realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) and how great his attention to what each thing deserves.

Also, the Prophet placed the third and final beloved thing in the feminine gender (*ṣalāt*, prayer), just like the first beloved thing, and inserted between them a masculine word (*ṭīb*, perfume). He began with women and ended with prayer, both being feminine, while the word between them, perfume, is identical to man's status in existence, for man is placed between God's Essence (*dhāt* – feminine), from which he stemmed, and woman, who stemmed from him. Also, he is between two feminine forms, the *dhāt* whose gender is feminine in language and woman which is feminine in its real (natural) meaning. In like manner, women are in reality (nature) feminine, while prayer is not really a feminine entity (except in language). Perfume, masculine in gender, is inserted between them as Ādam was between God's Essence, from which he was brought into existence, and Ḥawā', whose existence stemmed from him. If you wish, you can say (regarding God) that both His attribute (*ṣifa*) (of creation) and (the attribute) of ability (*qudra*) (to create) are also feminine in gender. Whichever system of thought you wish (to follow), you will find the prevalence of the feminine gender even among the sages who adhered to the theory of causality (*aṣḥāb al-ʿilla*) and made the Real the cause (*ʿilla*) of the existence of the world. *ʿIlla* itself is feminine. The reason for placing perfume after women is because of the smells of generation in women, for the best perfume is embracing the beloved, as they said in the famous proverb.[29]

Since Muḥammad was originally created as a servant, he never aspired to leadership, but was always prostrating and standing before God in a passive way, until God produced from him what He produced. He gave him the rank of action in the domain of breaths and good perfumes. Thus, He made perfume beloved to him, and for this reason placed perfume after women. He took into account the Real's degrees in His saying: "He is Elevated in degrees, Possessor of the Throne" (Qur'ān

27 That God possesses great or infinite grace is frequently mentioned in the Qur'ān, for example 2:105, 3:74, 174, 57:21, 29, 62:4.

28 This is an example of the many redundant sentences and phrases which fill the *Fuṣūṣ* and give the impression that originally the book began as a series of lectures.

29 I have not found this proverb.

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40:15), because He is established on the Throne through His name, the Merciful. Thus, Divine Mercy reaches everything encompassed by the Throne, as attested in His saying, "My Mercy encompasses everything" (Qurʾān 7:156). (221) The Throne embraces all things and the One established on it is the Merciful. Through His Reality Mercy permeates the world, as we have frequently explained in this book and in the Meccan Revelation (*sic*! *Al-Futūḥ al-makkī*).[30] God placed the perfume in the conjugal union referring to ʿĀʾisha's innocence and said: "Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men, and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them" (Qurʾān 24:26).[31] God made their odors good (sweet-smelling), because speech derives from breath, which is the essence of the odor. Thus, breath proceeds from (the mouth) as good or bad (sweet or disgusting), according to the way it is expressed in speech. With respect to its being originally divine, breath is all sweet-smelling and good; however, with respect to praise and condemnation, it is good and evil. On the badness of garlic, Muḥammad said: "It is a bush whose odor I detest,"[32] and he did not say, "I detest it," because one does not detest the substance (*ʿayn*) of a thing, but rather that which stems from it. Abhorrence of odors is based on custom, natural antipathy (*ʿadam mulāʾamat ṭabʿ*),[33] an aim (to be achieved), law, and lack of the perfection of (the human body) which one seeks. There are no other causes of disgust but those we have mentioned.

Now, since the matter is divided into evil and good, as we have said, God caused Muḥammad to love good, not evil. He described the angels as those who suffer bad odors, because rottenness resides in the elemental structure (of humans), for the human is created of "dried clay formed from dark mud" (Qurʾān 15:26, AH); that is, his odors (always) change.[34] Thus, the angels are disgusted by humans, because of their nature. Similarly, the dung beetle is harmed by the odor of the rose. Whereas (for us) its smell is good, for the dung beetle it is not so. Whoever possesses such a temperament (characterized metaphorically by bad odor) in essence and form, when he hears the truth it hurts him, (however) he rejoices in falsehood, as God said: "Those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in God" (Qurʾān 29:52). He described them through loss (*khusrān*) and said: "Those are losers" (*khāsirūn*, ibid.), those who "lost their souls" (themselves, Qurʾān 6:12 and passim), for whoever does not perceive the difference between good (222) and evil has no perception.

God made His Messenger love only the good in everything, and everything is good. Can one imagine or not that there exists in the world a temperament (of an entity) which finds only good and not evil in everything? We said that no such

30 *Futūḥāt*, Vol. IV, pp. 29f (ch. 198).
31 Here, as in other places, the author plays with the double meaning of *khabīth* (corrupt and malodorous) and *ṭayyib* (good and sweet-smelling), in order to interweave this verse into the context of the discussion on perfume.
32 Muslim, V:76 (565).
33 This is al-Qayṣarī's reading.
34 In reality this means that humans vacillate between good and evil deeds.

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entity exists, for we do not find such a phenomenon (seeing only good) in the source from which the world stemmed, that is, the Real; we find Him abhorring and loving, and the evil is that which is abhorred and the good is that which is loved. The world was created in God's image, and the human was created in two images (the Real and the world), hence, no human temperament perceives only one of the two aspects (good and evil). Thus, any human temperament can perceive the difference between the good and the evil, and to know by experience that a thing is evil and without experience (that is, by reason) that it is good, so that his (rational) perception of the good in a thing diverts him from (seeing) its evilness. This is conceivable. However, the removal of evilness from the world, that is, from being, is inconceivable. God's Mercy applies to both the good and the evil. With respect to itself, the evil is good and vice versa. Regarding a certain human temperament, a good thing may be evil from a certain standpoint and vice versa.

As for the third (part of the tradition) through which unevenness (the odd number) was completed, it is prayer. He (Muḥammad) said: "I was given delight in prayer," for prayer bears witness, because it is a secret conversation between God and his servant, as God said: "If you remember Me, I will remember you" (Qurʾān 2:152). Prayer is worship which is divided between God and His servant; half belongs to God and half to His servant, as it is related in the sound tradition about God, who said: "I have divided the prayer into two parts; half belongs to Me and half to My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for."[35] The servant says: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful" (Qurʾān 1:1), and God says: "My servant remembers Me." The servant says: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the created beings" (ibid., 2). God says: "My servant praises Me." The servant says: "The Compassionate, the Merciful" (ibid., 3). God says: "My servant extols Me." The servant says: "The King on the Day of Judgment" (ibid., 4). God says: "My servant exalts Me (and) entrusts Me with (his affairs)." Thus, the whole of this half (of *sūrat al-fātiḥa*) belongs exclusively to God.[36]

Then the servant says: "It is You we worship; it is you (223) we ask for help" (ibid., 5). God says: "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for." Thus, God produces participation (between Him and His servant) in this verse. The servant says: "Guide us to the straight way (ibid., 6), the way of those on whom You bestow favors, those who bring upon themselves no anger and who do not deviate from the right way" (ibid., 7). God says: "These (last three verses)[37] belong to My servant, and he will receive what he asks for." These (last three verses) are particularized to God's servant, just as the first (three verses) are particularized to Him. From this (division of the verses), we know the obligation to recite: "Praise be to God, the Lord of the creatures" (ibid., 1 or 2). Whoever does not recite it does not perform the prayer which is divided between God and His servant.

35 Muslim IV:38 (395). The citations below are taken from this tradition.
36 The first *sūra* of the Qurʾān has six verses without accounting the "In the name . . . ," which is usually considered the first verse.
37 The text has *hāʾulāʾi* (*sic*!) instead of *hādhihi*.

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Since prayer is a secret conversation, it is remembrance, and whoever remembers the Real sits with (*jālasa*) Him, and the Real sits with him, for in the divine tradition God truly said: "I am the companion (*jalīs* – I sit with) of him who remembers Me."[38] Now, whoever has the ability to see and sits with the one whom he remembers sees his companion. This is witness and seeing. If he is incapable of seeing, he does not see his companion. As a result, one who prays knows his rank (in prayer), whether he sees the Real with this seeing or not. If he does not see Him, he should worship Him through belief as if he sees Him, imagines Him in his *qibla*[39] and performs his secret conversation with him, listening to God's response.

If he is an *imām* (a prayer leader) for his own people and for the angels who pray with him – for everyone who prays is no doubt an *imām* – for the angels pray behind one who prays alone, as stated in a tradition,[40] he attains the level of the messengers in their prayer, that is, to be (one of) God's vicegerents. When he says: "God hears the one who praises Him," he is informing himself and those behind him that God has heard him, and then the angels and those who are present say: "Our Lord, praise belongs to You." That is because God says through the tongue of His servant: "God hears the one who praises Him."

Thus, consider the lofty rank of the prayer and the place to which it brings its performer. Whoever does not attain the degree of seeing in prayer will not reach its aim and will find no delight in it, for he does not see the One with whom he converses secretly. If he does not hear what the Real transmits to him in prayer, he does not belong to those who listen (to God). And whoever is not present in prayer with God, (224) neither hearing and nor seeing Him, is not praying at all and is not one of those who listen and witness. So long as prayer continues, there is no other kind of worship which can prevent one from carrying out other obligations.

The invocation of God is the strongest part in prayer, because prayer includes both words and acts – we have mentioned the description of the perfect human in performing the prayer in the Meccan Revelations (*al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya*) – for God says: "The prayer prevents from carrying out outrageous and evil deeds" (Qurʾān 29:45). This is because the Law forbids one who performs the prayer to engage in any other acts so long as the prayer lasts. "The remembrance of God is greater" (ibid.), that is, in prayer, viz., God's remembrance of His servant when He responds to his request. The servant's praise of God is greater than his remembrance of Him, because majesty belongs to God.[41] For this reason, God said: "God knows what you do" (ibid.), and He said: "or whoever listens and is a witness" (Qurʾān 50:37). He listens to God's remembrance of him in prayer.

Moreover, since existence derives from rational movement which transforms the cosmos from nonexistence into existence, prayer comprises the three kinds of movement: vertical movement, which corresponds to standing in prayer; horizontal movement, which corresponds to bowing in prayer; and downward movement,

38 Muslim, XVIII:2.
39 This is the direction to the Kaʿba in Mecca toward which the Muslim prays.
40 Bukhārī, IX:16 (659).
41 Qurʾān 45:37.

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which corresponds to prostration. The movement of the human is vertical, that of the animal is horizontal, and that of plants is downward, while the inanimate thing has no essential movement, for when a stone moves, another thing causes it to move.

As for his saying, "my delight was made to be in prayer," he does not ascribe this making to himself, for God's self-manifestation to the one who prays derives from God and not from the one who performs the prayer. That is because had he not mentioned this description of himself (as being delighted), God would have ordered him to pray without His being manifested to him. Since he received this delight as a favor, the vision of God was also a favor. He said: "my delight (*qurrat ʿaynī*) was made to be in prayer," and (this delight) is only the vision of the beloved (225), through which the eye of the lover becomes settled (*taqarru bihā ʿayn al-muḥibb*), from the word *istiqrār* (come to rest), for the eye comes to rest when it sees the beloved and does not look at some other thing, whether sensual or not.[42] For this reason, when praying one is forbidden to turn around in prayer, because this turning around is something the Devil steals from the servant's prayer, thus preventing him from seeing his beloved. Moreover, if (God) had been indeed the Beloved of the one who turns around, he would have turned in his prayer only toward the *qibla*. Every human knows himself, (that is), whether he is in this state or another in this specific worship, for "truly, man is a clear witness against himself, despite all the excuses he may put forward" (Qurʾān 75:14–15). One knows to distinguish between falsehood and truth in himself, because he knows his state, for it derives from his feeling (*dhawq*) of himself.

In addition, prayer has another part, for God commanded us to pray to Him and informed us that He prays for us. Thus, prayer is from us and from Him. If it is God who prays, He prays only through His name the Last (*al-Ākhir*), because He comes after the creation of the servant. It is the Real which the servant creates in his heart, whether through rational consideration or through following others (*taqlīd*). This is a god of belief (*al-ilāh al-muʿtaqad*). This god takes different forms in keeping with the predisposition which resides in a certain substrate (that is, place, society, etc.), as al-Junayd, when asked about gnosis and the gnostic, said: "the color of the water is like the color of the vessel in which it resides."[43] This is an answer which hits the target, speaking of the matter as it really is. Thus, this is God who prays for us. When we pray, we bear the name the Last, for in this station we, as we have mentioned, are in the position of those who have this name, thus, in His eyes we are in keeping with our position, and He looks at us only in the form which we have brought, because the one who prays falls behind the one who arrives first in the race.[44]

God's saying, "Each knows his prayer and exaltation" (Qurʾān 24:41) means his degree of being late in worshiping his Lord and his exaltation of God's

42 Affifi, I, p. 225, n. 1.

43 Abrahamov, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufis*, pp. 76f.

44 Since prayer is also one of God's self-manifestations, it is this self-manifestation which comes first from the divine perspective and the one who prays falls behind; that is, he performs what God has already established. One of the meanings of the verb *ṣallā* is "to be the second in the race."

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transcendence which derives from his predisposition. Everything without exception exalts the praise of its Lord, the most forbearing (226), the most forgiving.[45] For this reason, one cannot understand[46] in detail, one by one, the exaltation of the world. Another understanding of the verse "everything without exception exalts the praise of its Lord" (*biḥamdihi*, Qurʾān 17:44) is possible; the pronoun *hi* in *biḥamdihi* may refer to the praise spoken of each thing, just as we say concerning the human's belief, one praises the god of his belief and connects himself to him. (In like manner), the act one performs returns to oneself, thus one praises only oneself, for whoever praises the act undoubtedly praises only the agent of the act, because the perfection or imperfection of the act returns to its agent. Similarly, the god of belief is the product (*maṣnūʿ*) of one's thought; it is one's production (*ṣanʿ*). One's praise of that which one believes amounts to one's praise of oneself. For this reason, one dispraises the beliefs of others, and if one were just, one would not be able to do this. However, this believer, who worships his specific object, is no doubt ignorant of this (the truth), because he opposes the beliefs of others in their gods. That is because had he known al-Junayd's saying, "the color of the water is the color of its vessel," he would have approved of the belief of everyone and known God in every form and every belief. Such a person supposes (*ẓānn*), but does not know (*ʿālim*). For this reason, God said (in a tradition): "I am as my servant supposes Me to be" (*anā ʿinda ẓann ʿabdī bī*);[47] that is, I manifest myself to him only in the form of his belief; if he wishes, he will make (my self-manifestation) unlimited, and if he wishes, he will make it limited, for the God of beliefs is limited, and (hence) He is the God whom His servant holds in his heart, because the unlimited God cannot be comprised by anything, for He is the essence of things and of Himself. One cannot say that either God comprises Himself, or not, so understand! "God speaks the truth and guides to the right way" (Qurʾān 33:4).

45 This is a paraphrase of Qurʾān 17:44.

46 *lā yufqahu* occurs on the basis of the preceding Qurʾānic verse, which reads "you do not understand their praise" (*lā tafqahūna tasbīḥahum*).

47 Bukhārī, 97:15 (7405); Affifi, I, p. 33.

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